THE MAGAZINE OF

# Fantasy AND Science Fiction

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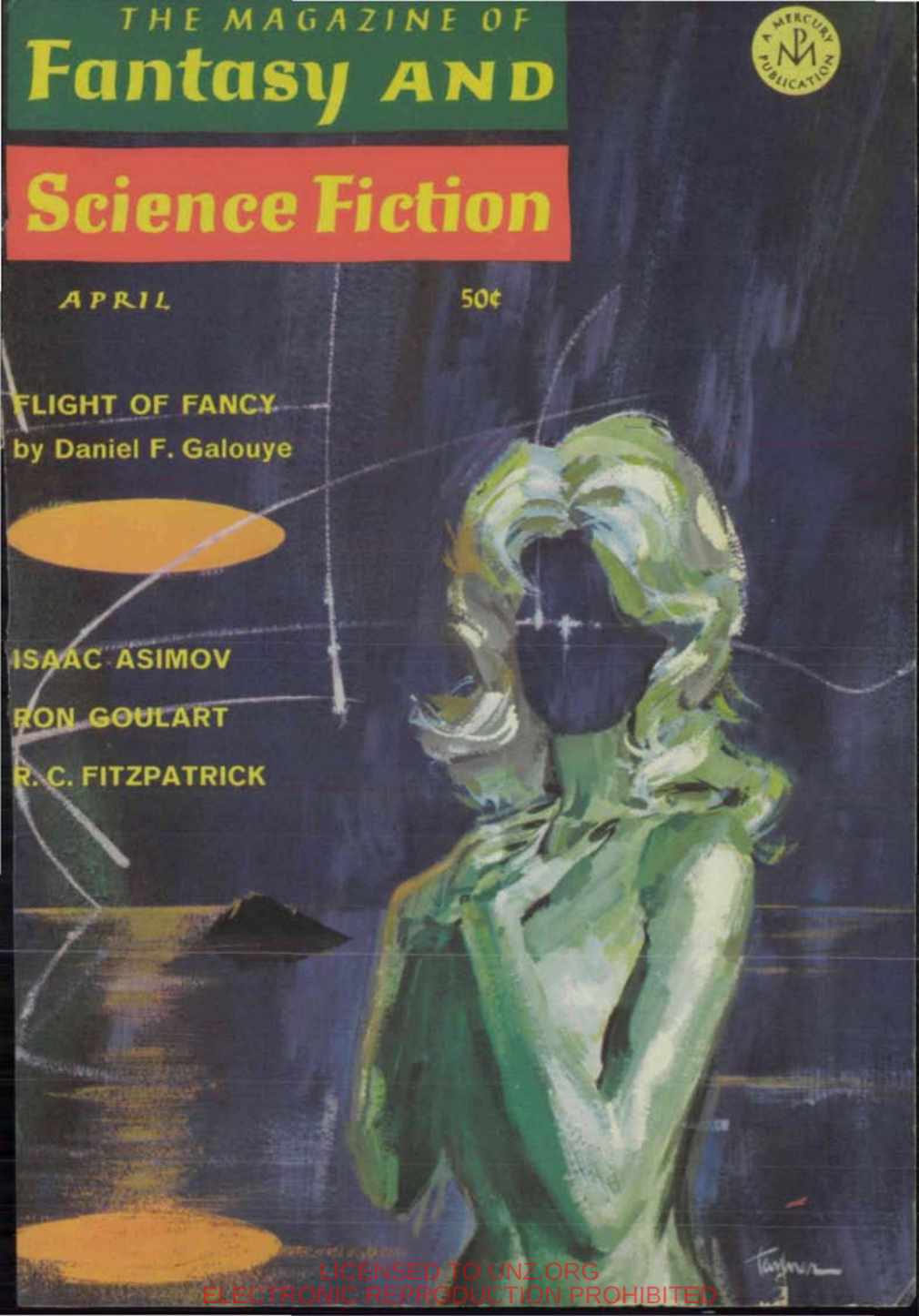
FLIGHT OF FANCY
by Daniel F. Galouye

ISAAC ASIMOV

RON GOULART

R. C. FITZPATRICK



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# Fantasy and Science Fiction

APRIL *Including Venture-Science Fiction*


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*Daniel F. Galouye is the author of some 75 stories (including "Sanctuary," F&SF, Feb. 1954 and "The Pliable," May 1956) His novel,* DARK UNIVERSE, *placed second to Heinlein's* STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND *in the 1962 Hugo Award balloting for best novel of the year. In 1965, Mr. Galouye was forced to give up writing and his job (as associate editor of the* New Orleans States-Item) *as a result of an illness caused by latent wartime injuries suffered as a naval patrol plane commander. He began to write again in 1967, and it is a pleasure to welcome him back to these pages with this sensitive and compelling tale of a not uncommon sort of imprisonment and an escape that most men find only in dreams.*

# FLIGHT OF FANCY

## *by Daniel F. Galouye*

"DREAMS OF FLYING," FRANK Proctor had once heard it said, possibly by some self-anointed analyst at a cocktail party, "are crude symbolism—the shallowest form of wish-fulfillment. The row becomes a little tough to hoe, so you simply take to your outstretched arms and soar away."

That such dreams had, of late, come with increasing frequency could probably be taken as a measure of how harsh his row had become, Proctor supposed.

There was Phyllis—but hadn't there *always* been Phyllis, if you conceded that two years could add up to a stifling, bitter eternity?—there was Phyllis now, the murmur of her laughter mounting the thunderous assault of sea upon rock far below.

Concealing his dejection, he let his gaze wander casually among the couples on the terrace about him. Then, with feigned indifference, he searched the dunes that stretched out beyond the railing. A tumbled disarray of soft, cottony puffs, they were washed by the same effulgent moonlight that silvered the roiling sea beneath the cliff.

Finally he located his wife, her elegant profile limned in sharp silhouette by the flood of radiance that swept up from the water and caressed her hair in gossamer embrace. This time she was with Ron McMurphy. And the moon laid a



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river of mercury along the upper curve of her arm as she reached out to touch his cheek.

Now it was McMurphy. The last time it had been Cosgrove. Before then, Pollard. Next? Proctor shrugged. About all you could be certain of was that there *would* be a next time—inevitably.

With his finger he traced a curve of the wrought iron railing, readily admitting there must be more than token truth in the proposition that dreams of flying are unconscious expressions of a desire to escape hostile reality. For the dreams came lately with haunting regularity, their symbolism all too apparent.

Always it was the same. He would be alone in a pristine forest whose profound stillness was violated only by Phyllis' coarse laughter. Rising miasma-like, her derisive peals would seem to strike terror into the heart of the glade.

He would know that he had to escape. But he could only cower before the mocking laughter that spilled down like thunderclaps from the foliage overhead, washed across the ground as though it were an angry, scouring wind.

Invariably at this point he would recall all the other dreams that had gone before. And he would bolt off into a clearing, arms spread rigidly, leaning forward, sensing for the smooth, swift flow of wind that would carry him effortlessly aloft.

But the wind never came fast enough. And when, finally, he would hurl himself desperately off the ground, he would succeed in remaining afloat only a few exhilarating moments before sinking back to the surface. There he would cringe in the dust of the forest while Phyllis' cachinnation surged to a higher, more frightening pitch.

There was no escape.

And his wife's suggestive laughter, rippling now over the dunes to jar him from his thoughts, only underscored the hopelessness he felt.

"You don't have to put up with it, you know."

Proctor started and turned in the direction of a drink that had been thrust toward him. Making the offering was Dick Matlock, appearing uncomfortable and bored in his dinner jacket, a bit too rugged for the crisp maroon bow tie that punctuated his blunt features.

Accepting the glass, Proctor said, "Not unless I buy the way out that she's offering for sale. And it comes at a hell of a price."

"Oh." Matlock cleared his throat awkwardly and glanced toward the cliff. "I was going to pretend I hadn't noticed."

"You'd be the only one who hadn't."

"I was talking about all this other stuff." Matlock's arm went out to encompass in its sweep the couples on the terrace, the re-

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mainder of the party behind sliding glass doors where J. B. Wentworth was serving up his latest witticisms.

"This other stuff," Proctor said, "I can put up with."

"But you don't have to. You are what the less well-heeled would describe as 'independently wealthy'. You can afford to get off the treadmill. Hell, advertising—beating somebody else's drum—is no place for you!"

"I can't just vegetate."

"But, good God—agency work? And with J.B. whistling the tunes?"

Proctor sipped from his glass. "What else did you have in mind?"

"Anything. If you like what you're doing, start your own outfit."

"Phyllis'd be lost. All our friends are with Wentworth. She was modeling for him long before we met."

Matlock glanced impatiently at the cliff. "Yes, I suppose Phyllis is rather satisfied at that."

Sometime later in the evening it began to appear that Wentworth's weekender would prematurely blow itself out with a Friday, rather than a Saturday night climax.

Proctor scarcely managed to escape the sinuous coils of a cha-cha line as it laid siege to the terrace. It was only to have been expected that Phyllis would be in the vanguard, generating a collective momentum that swept aside iron-lace furniture and potted plants alike.

The raucous, halting bass beat of the stereo persisted long after the treble component had trailed into inaudibility as he made his way aimlessly among the dunes. On his right, the sea swelled and billowed and churned phosphorescent foam as it spent its energy in a fury of sound and dashing water. So much like Phyllis—relentless, inconsiderate, delightfully preoccupied with the irresistible power that surged within her.

He dropped down to the sand and leaned back against a rock. He couldn't ignore Phyllis' contemptuous challenge much longer. The time for smothering his pride beneath a shield of bland indifference was, he feared, swiftly being exhausted.

But what could he do? She didn't share his conviction on the permanence of marriage. On the other hand, she wouldn't fall back on divorce as an acceptable expedient—not until he had become so disillusioned that he would be willing to buy his way out at any price.

Indistinguishable was the precise point in his troubled reflections that sleep came. That he had fallen off into slumber, however, was not entirely unexpected. His day had been overburdened by frustrating appointments and his temperament abraded by Phyllis' impregnable, smugly scheming silence during the drive to Went-

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worth's summer lodge. Nor was it out of keeping with circumstances that his fervent desire for release should again find symbolic expression in the, oh, so appropriate dream.

But this time it wasn't a mere, futile attempt. Rather, it was a wholly fulfilling experience. From a running start with only moderate momentum, he cast himself forward as he reached a dip in the ground.

Horizontal now, arms outstretched, he felt his feet scrape sand as he swung smoothly up along the far concavity of the depression. Then he topped the crest of the next dune, and a gust of sea-laden air caught him up in its powerful grip and bore him aloft.

The force of the current rippled his sleeves as he soared up, up, up into the milky softness of the night sky. Banking in a long, sweeping arc, he drank in the ecstasy of the flight.

And he wondered whether any symbolic connotation could be attached to the absence of Phyllis' derisive laughter from the background of his dream. Had he finally managed to succeed only because, in this sequence, there was no frightening force impelling him to panicky flight?

Leveling his arms with the horizon, perhaps five hundred feet above the shore, he nosed over into a shallow dive and the wind pressed more palpably against his forehead and shoulders, smoothing his glide into a steady, firm plunge. He aimed tentatively at a dune, leveled off inches above its crest and streaked out over the edge of the cliff.

The updraft, fresh with the moisture and smell of the sea, brought him gently back to dizzying heights and filled his delightful dream experience with an exaltation of spirit that struck down all lingering concern.

Then, as he paralleled the shore with the floating disc of the moon chasing its own reflection across scintillating water, he became aware of the other soarer.

A pale patch of whiteness, firmed into visibility by moonglow playing against the creaminess of slender limbs and bleached shorts, she came smoothly along, emerging from the darkness of the littoral region beyond. Her blonde hair, held rigidly in place by a crisscross of braids, was amply protected from assault by the wind. And her face, giving birth to a reassuring smile as she drew closer in flight, seemed to possess the classic Grecian qualities that were suggested by her garland-like coiffure.

Starting, Proctor faltered in his glide and the rushing air lost its grip on his arms. He plunged perhaps several hundred feet before he finally managed to restore his attitude and check the fall. Then he straightened and, in gradual de-

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scent, headed back for the rock from which he had launched himself into flight.

And all the while the girl came along behind him, maneuvering her lithe body in graceful motions that controlled the direction of her glide. Meanwhile, she smiled in amusement over his awkwardness.

He lost the remainder of his flying speed when he was but a foot above the sand. The fall, bringing him up but not forcefully against the boulder, was humiliating, and he would rather that the girl hadn't witnessed it.

But she was kneeling before him now, shaking him by the shoulder, anxiously inquiring whether he was all right.

It was no longer a dream. And, momentarily, he was bewildered. Then he understood. The girl had happened along while he slept against the rock. He had probably made some unlikely noises or flailed his arms, and she had become concerned. At the same time, by opening his eyes before he was fully awake, he had introduced her into the dream sequence.

"Hi," he said. "Hope I didn't frighten you."

She only stared at him. But her puzzlement drained none of the youthful attractiveness from her features. He saw now that, with his semiconscious glimpse, he had transferred her into the dream exactly as she was—shorts, halter, braided hair and all. But his imagination had not exaggerated her unspoiled loveliness.

Wanting to assure the girl, he grinned and said, "I fell asleep. I dreamed I was flying. If I frightened you, I'm sorry."

"Oh," she said. Then, with relaxed features that seemed to laugh at him, she added, "I'm Sandy. Do you fly often?"

"Quite often. It's a delicious experience when it comes off right. If I ever get the bugs ironed out, I'll really have something."

"Bugs?" Her negligible nose crinkled.

"All I have to do is find out how I manage it when I'm asleep. Actually, tonight was the first time it came off without a hitch."

Somehow she seemed disappointed. "Must be delightful."

"Pure ecstasy. You're not one of Wentworth's guests?"

She rose and sat upon the rock, her well-proportioned legs slanting forward and matching their paleness against the gray of the sand. "Oh, no. I'm one of the natives. From down the beach."

She gestured northward, then inclined her head in the direction of the lodge. "I couldn't help being attracted by the racket. You'll probably be satisfied that you've stirred every sand crab between here and the cape."

"Not me," he protested, rising beside her. "I'm for giving the beach back to the crustaceans."

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"Then you don't like it here."

"On the contrary. I couldn't imagine a more pleasant setting." He grimaced and plugged his ears against the distant cacophony of Wentworth's party. "Or a more outrageous desecration."

She clasped her arms against the spreading chill of night, and he offered her his jacket. "You don't by any chance fly too?" he said lightly. "You look like the type who might."

"Only between classes."

"Schoolgirl?"

"Teacher. County Central." She drew the jacket about her and stood there swathed in moonlight.

"I'll see you home."

She smiled with her eyes. "Shall we walk, or take to the air?"

When the party spent itself in a final gasp, Proctor had long since retired to the room assigned him and his wife in the guest house. He waited another hour, however, before falling asleep. By then he had accepted the fact that Phyllis was bedded down elsewhere.

Blazing down on the terrace, early sunlight sketched in sharp detail the devastation of Friday night's cha-cha ritual. But enough chairs and tables had been set upright to accommodate the early risers.

Proctor stabbed a grapefruit section with his spoon, but only sat there reflecting on Phyllis' latest offense against his dignity. He had long since come to anticipate her debauchery, to regret each occasion with a keen but quiet personal mortification. Now, however, it was apparent his humiliation was no longer to be an entirely private affair.

Edging the grapefruit aside, he drained his coffee cup while restricting his gaze to the table top. Thus he wasn't aware of Phyllis' presence until she abruptly seated herself next to him. She wore a shaggy beach robe, boldly spread open upon a black bikini that was only a shade darker than her upswept hair.

It was perhaps indicative of the generally miserable circumstances in which he was involved that she should begin almost exactly as Matlock had the night before:

"You *don't* have to take it." She said it with a smile—and a very attractive one at that. But then, facial expressions were part of her professional repertory. And the smile was there perpetually. Even when she argued.

"Let's go home, Phyllis."

"Like hell we'll go home. I'm enjoying this weekend."

"That's obvious."

"And it's also entirely my business."

"You're married to me."

"Only a piece of paper says so."

Conciliatory, he leaned toward her. "Why don't we try to get some mileage out of that piece of paper?"

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"For what? A pious home life by the hearthstone?"

Everything about her was stark, severe, blended into a not gaudy, but certainly not subdued beauty. Her eyes were a vivid brown flecked with green; the cut of her lips and the contours of her cheeks, precise. Even her movements, though flowing, were exact and calculated. It was the sort of superficial, controlled attractiveness that appealed to the commercial camera but went scarcely deeper than the impregnable surface.

About Sandy, on the other hand —her name was actually Sandra, he had learned—there was a gauzy softness, an innate simplicity. When she wore halter and shorts, it was purely self-accommodating, not intended to create a sensation.

"What do you want, Phyllis?"

"I want out." Her smile faltered, but only briefly.

"I won't let you out. You can't very well hale yourself into domestic court on a charge of infidelity. And you should know by now that I won't."

Harshness burdened the corners of her mouth. "What God has joined together?"

He nodded.

"Then you're some special kind of a kook."

"You can spend me broke. But I'll be the one who pays the tab. You're not going to write your own check in a divorce court."

He turned from her now sober face and watched several couples, clients and members of Wentworth's staff, file from the guest house. They struck out across the coastal ridge, following the path as it twisted among the dunes on its way down to the beach.

Opposite the terrace rail, the cliff's edge was a sharp spur of serrate rock that underscored the seascape beyond. Now it was a becalmed, ebbing sea that seemed to drowse in its azure solitude while flights of raucously laughing gulls streaked the mirror surface.

As though borne down by its own ponderous weight, the ridge fell off to the north, inclining gradually to merge with the flat expanse of sand. Isolated boulders, straddling the shore line at lengthening intervals, marked the consummate blend of cliff and beach.

Beyond the farthest rock, perhaps a quarter of a mile from Wentworth's swimming area, Sandra's split-level cottage rose in quiescent seclusion. Its back was turned on a hard-surfaced road that felt an only infrequent tread of hurrying tires.

Phyllis reclaimed his attention. "Darling, you're thoroughly predictable, you know. You'll want out too, eventually. But when you do, you'll stick to your stuffy conventions. You'll spread your cloak across the mud puddle, blank check and all. Because, you see, sanctimony and chivalry go hand in hand."

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"You're counting on quiet proceedings in the judge's chamber then."

"Unless you'd care to liven things up a bit. How about going out on a tear and providing me with legal grounds and a correspondent to name?"

McMurphy, in swim trunks and with a Polaroid camera hanging from his neck, strode from the lodge. He crossed the terrace and headed for the beach, obviously avoiding Proctor's stare.

Phyllis didn't see her latest paramour until he had reached the path. Then she pushed her chair from the table and called after him, "Ron, wait up. I'll race you to the beach."

Proctor watched them until they disappeared beyond a dune.

Because he didn't choose to be conspicuous by his absence from the swimming party, he fitted himself out in trunks and sandals and was soon trekking across the dunes. Not staying on the path, he topped a rise and eventually saw that he was following the same footprints he had laid down the night before.

He paused perhaps twenty feet from the rock where he had met Sandra and stood there in thoughtful withdrawal. It was only natural that he should recognize the considerable difference between her and Phyllis, he supposed. But, at the same time, wasn't it conceivable that his bitter disappointment with Phyllis might encourage an exaggerated appreciation of the other girl?

But Sandra *was* lovely and individual in her own right. And, with her, he felt an indefinable affinity, even on the basis of just an hour's acquaintance. It was a closeness that he had somehow never been able to effect with his wife. It was as though the girl had stood staunchly by his side while they had shared many a challenging and gratifying experience—rather than just a dream-spawned flight above moon-blanched waters and a stroll along a glistening beach.

He stared more intently at the boulder that had brought them together. There was something out of place about the rock, about the rippled sand around its base. But he couldn't quite distinguish the incongruity, whatever it was.

Then his gaze went down the vista of beach to the terminal boulder of the coastal formation. There a solitary, supple figure in a white bathing suit, hair braided compactly, poised on a jutting ledge before diving into the water.

He set off purposefully on a course that skirted wide around Wentworth's swimming party.

By the time he reached the far rock, however, Sandra had already dried herself and, unaware of his approach, had started out for her house. He hastened his stride and, arriving within hailing distance, called after her.

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Surprised, she turned and waited. Standing there against a backdrop of towering cumulus clouds that climbed majestically out of the sea, indifferent to the gentle rise and fall of foaming water about her ankles, she seemed like a sculptured Nereid, begotten by Nereus and risen from the depths in all her mythical beauty.

"Hi," she greeted. "Catch any good updrafts lately?"

"The field's all socked in and I'm grounded for the day. Thought I might join you for a swim."

"Possibly," she agreed, continuing down the beach in her competent stride, "but not until I put in a stint at nurse-playing."

"Oh?"

"Time for dad's insulin shot."

Sandra's father had the unlikely first name of Erasmus and, on several occasions after his introduction to Proctor on the previous evening, had insisted upon its use. He was slight of build, but tall. Though not pallid, his complexion suggested that his diabetic condition confined him generally to the house, sparing him the weathering effect of coastal sun and wind.

In their stare through the den's picture window, his eyes now conveyed the wistfulness of a man who had spent most of his sixty-odd years upon the sea. But he radiated much good humor when he chuckled and said, "Sandy told me this morning that you like to fly."

She had gone to return the hypodermic syringe to its case. And Proctor somehow felt pleased that they had discussed him.

"It's uplifting," he said, tongue in cheek.

And Erasmus laughed heartily. He was an engaging listener, seeming to hang on every word directed at him. "I once read a book on dream interpretation. Said dreams of flying are among the most common."

"Almost everybody has them, to some extent."

"And the extent depends upon the person—his nature, his aspirations. You ever do any actual flying, Mr. Proctor?"

"It's Frank. Yes, I put in four years with the Air Force."

"Did you dream of flying before then—without a plane, that is?"

Proctor nodded.

"And how about *while* you were in the service? Did you have any such dreams then?"

"No. Now that I think about it. None at all."

"Figures. The basic desire was being gratified in your actual experiences."

Either that, Proctor agreed, or there had been nothing from which he had wanted to escape during the period. He leaned back upon the window seat, still feeling awkward in only trunks and sandals. But Erasmus' reassuring good nature had done much to offset his uneasiness.

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The far wall was overlaid with shelves bearing many books. There was a desk—Sandra's, he assumed—modern and polished. Its surface was bare except for an oak pedestal that supported a mounted white sea gull whose wings were spread so realistically that it implied its own background of wind-frothed waves and shimmering blue skies. Before another picture window a high-powered spyglass, alert on its tripod, commanded the beach, and Wentworth's lodge.

Erasmus rubbed his arm where the insulin shot had been administered. "Tell me—how do you go about flying? What's your technique?"

Proctor flushed with embarrassment and began resenting the other's persistent attachment to the subject. But then he realized his host's interest was only facetious.

"Oh, it's simple—in theory," he explained. "A good, running start, then you lean forward, spread your arms and off you go. When it works, that is."

"That's the more generally accepted method, I suppose. Although there's also floating, swimming, arm-threshing as though you were treading water, the perpetual dive with arms extended forward over the head, and a lot of other ways. You ever really get airborne?"

If Erasmus hadn't been matching his smile right along, Proctor would not have gone this far. "Last night, for the first time."

"Any other near successes?"

"None to speak of. It's always been a useless struggle. The wind isn't just right. I feel too heavy. The ground acts like a magnet, or —"

"You ever try it?"

"What do you mean?"

"You ever *try* flying?"

"Last night—"

"No, I mean really—when you were fully awake."

"Why no, I—" Proctor began, then broke off to stare uncertainly at the other.

"Why not?"

Erasmus, no longer smiling either, sat erect in the sudden, conspicuous silence of the room.

"Why not?" he repeated. "Seems to me that when something is suggested again and again on an unconscious level, a person should at least want to put it to a conscious test, just out of curiosity."

"I'd feel ridiculous." With a laugh, Proctor tried to steer the conversation back into its formerly jocular vein. "And I wouldn't appreciate a banged-up nose."

"Seems to me there were some women a couple or three hundred years back, principally in Salem, who didn't bother about noses."

Proctor glanced at his watch. "I wonder what's keeping Sandy."

"I suppose the traditional broomstick at least provided something tangible to hold on to."

"You don't believe—"

"Why not? Lots of legend, lore,

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history and court proceedings have been handed down on the subject."

"But nothing really authentic. Just accusations. Panic. Mass psychosis."

"That sort of universal response has to have *something* behind it." With that, Erasmus appeared to withdraw into his thoughts.

Proctor went over to the other picture window, imagining the subject to have been exhausted. Down the beach, Wentworth's swimming party seemed to be generating the same head of steam that had typified the previous night's cha-cha line. He couldn't identify Phyllis in the frolicsome crowd, but she was no doubt the center of attraction in an area where many bodies churned and splashed.

Not discouraged by his guest's transfer of interest, Erasmus went on: "And, if you're looking for something authentic, well-documented, I'll refer you to one Joseph Desa—St. Joseph of Cupertino, Italy. A Franciscan friar who became a priest and was canonized back in 1767. He was lucky. He escaped the fiery stake that might have been his lot if he hadn't enjoyed the protection of his vestments."

"Never heard of him."

"If you're interested I have a biographical account by the Benedictine monks of Ramsgate, England."

"What did he do?"

"Things you and a lot of others only dream about. Entering his church and flying to the altar over the heads of worshippers was almost an everyday occurrence. There's also an account of how he once soared into a tree and perched on a branch for half an hour."

More annoyed than incredulous, Proctor began again, "You're not trying to tell me—"

"What's the highest you've ever fallen from?"

"Ten feet, I'd say. Out of a tree. When I was eight."

"Hurt yourself?"

"Hobbled around in a leg cast for the next month."

"Think it might have been more tragic if you'd fallen, say, fifty feet? Or a hundred?"

"It would have been fatal."

"Had a friend with Naval Search and Rescue during the war. He made a pickup of a downed Air Corps gunner on the China coast. Seems the fellow had fallen through his plane's bomb bay—at four thousand feet and without a parachute—into a paddy. The experience left him sore and with a few bruises."

Erasmus appeared to derive satisfaction from Proctor's nonplussed stare. He continued: "The morning paper's on the couch. There's a story on page three about another airman. At Eglin Air Force Base. He fell a thousand feet after his chute failed. Walked away with a scratched knee."

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"All right, you've made your point," Proctor said, without actually conceding anything. "What are you trying to prove?"

Erasmus glanced down at his visitor's ring finger. It was perhaps the fourth or fifth time his eyes had lingered on the simple gold band. His expression again remotely implied concern over Sandra's possible involvement. But Proctor imagined that his own candid display of the ring was serving to vindicate his purpose in the other's regard.

Abruptly Erasmus was smiling again. And he seemed purposely to restore badinage to his words when he said, "Why, I'm only proposing that maybe *some* people can fly, perhaps without even knowing it. A sort of talent for levitation. And unsupported flight is simply levitation with locomotion added."

Proctor fell comfortably back into the spirit of jest. "Sure. Way back in history some interstellar levitant was stranded here on Earth. He settled down with the woman of his choice and left his seed in the race. Now, every once in a while special gene matches special gene and somebody blossoms forth who can fly."

"Either that, or the seed was accidentally injected by Nature herself, without the help of your visitor. But one thing's for sure: If I could take to the air, I'd make certain nobody else ever found out."

"No? Seems to me you'd have a gold mine."

Erasmus shook his head. "More likely I'd either be shot down, ridden through the streets on a rail, put in a zoo, or given the fiery stake treatment."

Erasmus went over to the desk and sent his hand brushing lightly over an outstretched wing of the mounted gull. As though he were a blind person reading Braille, his fingertips trembled while exploring the grace and harmony of the wing's aerodynamic perfection.

"Sandy, Mr. Proctor," he said, a bit more formal, "isn't nearly as sophisticated as she likes to pretend. She bruises easily."

Proctor couldn't hold the man's tactful fatherly solicitude against him. "A lot of us do." With the notable exception of Phyllis, he added in an aside to himself.

"Yes, I suppose we do at that. I'll go see what's holding her."

Proctor decided he liked Erasmus quite a bit, despite the fact that he couldn't readily understand him. At any rate, he appeared gentle, interesting and possessed of a generous, though at times confusing sense of humor. Their entire conversation had, of course, been all in good jest. But you could look through the man's purposely superficial mien and find his basic sincerity.

Returning to the south picture window, Proctor spent some moments in detachment as he watched Wentworth's party in the distance.

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Phyllis had finished her swim. That much could be determined on the basis of the vigorous activity now in progress on the beach. Then, for a moment, he thought he recognized her by the black bikini. It must be she. Who else would be clinging to the back of a man while he stumbled across the sand and tried, but with little honest effort, to throw off his welcome burden?

Proctor's arm brushed against Erasmus' spyglass and he lunged for the instrument when it teetered on its tripod. But the telescope settled back in its original position with no harm having been done.

On impulse, he bent his face to the eyepiece, intending to swing the instrument upon the beach party. But he saw at once that he couldn't disturb its line of sight without betraying his meddlesomeness. At the same time, though, he had uncovered that very trait in Erasmus' character (but not Sandra's; the telescope wasn't adjusted to her height). For the field of observation was focused on Wentworth's terrace. And the cross hairs fell precisely upon the table at which he and Phyllis had only recently sat.

Evidently Erasmus was much more concerned over his daughter than he appeared to be.

Proctor moved from the telescope when he heard the others approaching in the hall.

Sandra came in first, towel draped across her shoulders and signifying readiness for the swim to which she had committed herself.

"I'm not always this much of a slow poke," she testified, "but I had to get my contract off in the mail for next school term."

He fell in beside her as she moved off toward the outer door.

And, without looking around, he called back to Erasmus, "We'll be just down the beach a bit."

When there was no answer, she laughed and said, "Oh, but he can't hear you."

Holding the door open, Proctor stared alternately at the girl and her father.

"He's totally deaf," she explained, "but you'll never come across a better lip reader."

Proctor treaded water, bobbing with each rise and fall, as he watched the girl clamber up the partly submerged rock—always graceful, never ungainly, not even when she slipped on the moist stone. She hauled herself erect and paused to adjust the bathing suit about her thighs. Meanwhile she smiled down upon him, and he could only console himself for having never seen such an unaffected, winsome expression on Phyllis' face.

Rising lithely upon her toes, she sent her arms swinging forward and out, then sprang with all the poise and assurance of a professional diver.

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For an eternity she seemed suspended against the cloudless sky, flawless both in the execution of her swan dive and in her own exquisite form. Then, as she arched down, it was as though she were floating rather than plunging. And, on entering the water, she appeared hardly to disturb its surface at all.

Only with reluctance did Proctor remember he had anticipated the possibility of an emotional backlash that might involve this girl in his defiance of Phyllis. And he questioned the logic of having come for a morning swim with Sandra.

From down the shore came a surge of spirited shouts and wolf whistles as Wentworth's beach party found fresh momentum. Unless he were mistaken, Phyllis was creating another sensation of sorts. Perhaps her Egyptian belly dance burlesque—which always went over big in a bikini. But he couldn't be certain that was the order of affairs, not with a rock formation cutting off his vision.

Meanwhile Sandra had surfaced and was swimming over to the ledge. He followed and pulled himself up beside her.

While he thudded water out of his ear, she said, "I don't seem to know very much about you, Mr. Proctor—do I?"

Her return to conventional address, after having accepted the informality of first names, was obviously intended only to point up the incompleteness of their acquaintance.

"Would you like to know more?"

"Don't see why not."

"You know that I have a wife."

"Is she pretty?"

"Too."

"Then why aren't you with her?"

It wasn't a grilling in any sense. Rather, Sandra impressed him as being only casually interested in the answers. Yet, he sensed there might be a hidden concern. Or was it only that he hoped to arouse her deeper curiosity?

"You wouldn't enjoy hearing the reasons," he said.

"Where do you live? What do you do?" she went on in a desultory fashion.

He told her and she listened, but not with complete attention.

When he had finished, she observed, "It doesn't sound like exciting work."

"It isn't."

"And you don't seem like the sort of person who would be attracted to huckstering."

He only shrugged his shoulders.

"Still," she added thoughtfully, "I wouldn't write you off as *some special kind of a kook.*"

He started. "You *did* look through that telescope! And Erasmus eavesdropped with his lip reading!"

She, too, registered surprise. "I thought I would mystify you with

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the knowledge of what your wife said. Yes, we looked."

Proctor harbored no resentment. Instead, he was gratified that she had been interested enough to spy on him.

"You're not angry?" she asked.

"Just relieved. Now you know. Anyway, Erasmus had a right to find out whatever he could about a married man who brings his daughter home at night. Then, too, you didn't *have* to let on that you had pried."

But, at the same time, he wondered why she was allowing herself to become involved. She didn't appear accustomed to flying in the face of convention. Yet she was doing nothing to discourage him.

Sandra unfolded her legs from beneath herself and rose for another dive.

"No point in letting the weekend slip through our fingers," she admonished, then propelled herself from the ledge.

But, as she sprang, her foot skidded across the wet surface and her dive was far from impressive. She went down awkwardly close to the rock, shoulder and arm impacting first.

Proctor rose laughing and casting about for an appropriate quip. But he tensed when she failed to return to the surface. Instantly he cast himself in after the girl—and collided with her submerged, limp form. He retrieved her by the arm, brought her up and secured a grip on the rock. She had only been stunned though. Even as he shoved her upon the ledge, she began shaking her head groggily.

"You all right?" he demanded, turning her over and helping her to sit up.

"I—I think so."

But it was apparent she wasn't. As he knelt beside her on one knee, her head lolled and came down against his chest.

"Sandy!"

"Sh-h-h. I'll be all right."

He put his arm about her shoulder and supported her against him.

"That was a fool thing to do, wasn't it?" she said finally.

"Feeling better?"

"No, but I will be in a minute." Although she laid her hand upon his arm, she made no effort to push away.

"I'll take you home."

"No, really. I'll be all right."

She managed to look up at him. Her eyes, a deeper blue-green than the sea, lingered steadily on his, and her lips parted in a faint smile, then firmed again.

He took her face in his hands and tilted her head up.

She returned the kiss in full measure.

Crestfallen, Proctor leaned upon the wrought iron rail. The night sky was Raphael's serene Madonna, folding back swaddling clouds to expose a russet moon just turning gibbous. Sea and air were calm.

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But gentle swells whispered upon the rocks below.

He was alone on the terrace. Beyond sliding glass doors Wentworth had captured a sparse audience of early appearing guests. With abundant gestures, he was re-enacting his landing of the mounted sailfish that dominated the room from its plaque on the wall.

Proctor patted the pockets of his dinner jacket, located his cigarettes, lit one and went over to the outside bar. He poured a hefty slug of Scotch, reached for the fizz bottle, then changed his mind. He drained the glass and poured two more in quick succession.

What to do about Sandra? How could he have let anything like that happen? How could she?

Was it emotional backlash? An attempt to land on his feet as he recoiled from Phyllis? No. He could objectively say it wasn't. Or could he?

Twice more he refilled and emptied his glass, then he washed the taste out of his mouth with ginger ale.

Divorce? Merely let Phyllis have her way? A simple charge of mental cruelty? The application, of course, would be for a ridiculous amount. But even if it left him broke, say, wouldn't it be worth it?

Yes, it would. But it was no acceptable solution. For somewhere along the way, somehow, he had subscribed to the proposition that, once made, a bed should be lain in. Otherwise, sincerity and integrity were shams, and life was without purpose.

Abruptly he knew he could never see Sandra again. For she didn't deserve to be involved in the ugly mess Phyllis would make if she ever suspected him of infidelity.

Someone had turned on the stereo, and Wentworth, together with his wife and obsequious satellites, began drifting out onto the terrace. Phyllis, with an improvised solo cha-cha, surged to the front of the group and promptly replaced the agency president as the center of attention.

She saw Proctor and, breaking away from the others, headed directly for him. He started to move out of her reach. But she pinned him there with the insistence of her stare.

Approaching the bar, she smiled for no apparent reason. It was a complacent expression that puzzled him. While they had dressed an hour earlier, he had caught her regarding him in the same amused manner on several occasions. Twice she had chuckled. And now she was laughing again as she laid her sequin bag on the bar. "Make mine Scotch on the rocks, darling."

He shoved the ingredients toward her without saying anything.

"Oh? No cloak over the mud puddle?"

"Maybe I'm fresh out of cloaks."

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"That would be drastic, wouldn't it? You've never been without one before." She plunked two ice cubes into her glass. But she paused with her hand on the bottle and chuckled softly. When the sound blossomed into a laugh, she attracted several curious glances.

She had acted this way once before, Proctor remembered—the first time she had decided to boast about an affair. All that day she had exuded delightful anticipation, as she was doing now.

Raising her glass, she offered a toast: "Here's to the cloak."

"Aren't you going to circulate tonight?"

"Oh, no. I'm going to be a very good girl—for a long while."

Now he was quite curious. "Why?"

"Because, dear, I've won."

"Won what?"

She poured another drink and handed it to him. "This one's for you. You'll need it. And, oh boy, I'll bet you're going to dream about flying tonight."

While he placed the glass on the bar, she opened her sequin bag and paused with a hand thrust inside. "The detail in these is excellent. But there isn't any reason why it shouldn't be. Ron's the best still man on Wentworth's staff."

She handed him two Polaroid prints. He stared numbly down at them. The first showed him kissing Sandra on the rock after he had pulled her from the water. In the other, they were embracing as they stood erect on the ledge.

Phyllis laughed. Again, it was a soft sound. But this time it was like the crack of a whip.

"Of course, there are others. Several others. The second kiss. And the third. You and she wading back to the beach, arm in arm. Real tender. Ron and I had a good vantage point behind the next rock."

Proctor crumpled the prints and shoved them into his pocket. "How much?"

"Just look how fast he whips off the cloak now! How much you got, bub?"

"You've aimed at this sort of a trap all along, haven't you?"

"Oh, you poor, simple fool. You didn't *actually* think you swept me breathless to the hearthstone?"

Somehow he was grateful there were others around. "All right. Incompatibility. Mental anguish. Whatever you say. You call the shot and fill in the check."

She seemed to be repressing a smile. "Would you suggest Mexico?"

"Good enough."

"My, but you're anxious. She really that worthy of protection?"

"Yes."

"That's what I hoped." Despite her attractiveness, her face became harsh. "Frank, it's not going to be Mexico—nor as simple a thing as incompatibility."

"Don't press your luck. I don't

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have any more chips to put up. All you can do is lose some of what I'm willing to let you rake in."

"Countersuit?" she taunted.

He nodded.

Once again she laughed. "And what do you think you could prove? Everybody you know answers to Wentworth. And J.B. isn't going to let anything happen to little Phyllis."

Proctor couldn't dispute that. Wentworth had been the first—even before Phyllis had taken a brief time out for her speculative venture into marriage. Since then, J.B. had come back for seconds. And it was a cinch he expected to return for thirds.

Wentworth had, several times during the day, assured his guests that if they imagined Friday night had been fun they hadn't seen anything yet. Why, he had predicted at one point, before Saturday evening's blowout was over, they'd have "the whole damn cliff jumpin'."

It was, of course, an overstatement—but just barely.

Proctor escaped through the terrace gate shortly before eleven. Glass in hand, he stumbled over one couple as he weaved toward the cliff, perhaps a hundred feet beyond the railing. He skirted another couple and drew up before the precipice.

Strong currents of wind, laden with spray from the assault of wave upon rock, fluttered his trousers and whipped pendent strands of hair about his forehead. Yet he was warm.

He looked at the half empty glass and decided he had had enough. Perhaps far too much, although he had come to recognize the existence of circumstances that could undermine the effectiveness of liquor. He hurled the glass out into space. Luminescing in the moonlight as it receded into the depths, it wreathed itself in the veil of its own spilling liquid.

Eventually he caught the sound of Phyllis' voice, subdued but still climbing above the grumble of surf and the more distant racket from the terrace. Then he spotted her off to the right, although she wasn't aware of his nearness. With McMurphy, as she had been the night before, she was absently tossing pebbles into the sea.

McMurphy stepped closer and tried to put his arm about her waist. But she pushed away. Evidently she was, as she had promised, being a very good girl. From now on, it was apparent, she'd provide no opportunity for building a defense against her.

Proctor moved off in the other direction, heading inland, away from the cliff and into the region of rippled dunes and scattered boulders. He stumbled occasionally and finally decided that although the Scotch had taken the edge off none of his worry, it was having effects.

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He wrested off his tie and crammed it into a pocket. A short while later, as he plodded ahead, he removed his jacket and flung it across his shoulder.

Then, once more, he found himself approaching the rock where Sandra had come upon him the night before. Had some unconscious yearning, stemming from hopelessness, carried him back? Had he come because it was here he had met Sandra? Or because it was here he had, in a most gratifying dream, finally succeeded in taking to the air and leaving all concern behind?

If only he *could* soar off on outstretched arms!

Then he ridiculed himself for indulging the fanciful desire. That he had done so was no doubt a measure of the Scotch's effectiveness after all.

He paused before the rock, trying to visualize himself and the girl seated there after she had awakened him. The vision swam in his mind and he delighted in the vivid recollection.

Then he faltered and dropped his jacket on the sand. He shook his head, passing a hand over his face. But the tracks remained—the footprints that had caught his attention that morning as he had gone by, but whose significance had never clearly registered.

Now, struggling against a great pall of confusion, he went closer and looked down at the ground.

Standing out sharply in the moonlight were the prints he had made on his approach from the lodge the night before. And there was where he had leaned back against the rock and fallen sleep —where Sandra had knelt beside him.

Bearing off to the right were his own footprints and Sandra's, trailing down the slope toward the beach and her cottage.

But nowhere—not in any of the areas where his eyes desperately searched—could he find her footprints *leading to* the rock!

He circled the boulder twice. But his bizarre impression remained unchanged, valid:

Sandra had not *walked* to the rock!

He stood there swaying against the giddying effects of the Scotch, almost afraid to open his eyes and look once more.

And he found himself constructing a mental picture of a black-robed Franciscan priest floating off his feet as he entered his church and soaring ethereally above the congregation.

The image faded, washed away like sand on a beach, and was replaced by another visionary scene —an airman tumbling without parachute through his open bomb bay. Falling while he screamed out his terror to the silent sky. Thrashing. And somehow, without even realizing it, generating enough lift

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to break his impact. Walking away without daring to question the miracle that had saved his life.

And there was Sandra. How she had seemed to hang at the crest of her dive! He had accepted the illusion as a spellbound appreciation of her form and grace. But had she actually *remained suspended* for a few moments?

He opened his eyes and revolted against the insane, Scotch-inspired thoughts. But Erasmus' words, teasing, provoking, sounded in his memory:

" . . . Maybe *some* people can fly, perhaps without even knowing it . . ."

". . . If I could take to the air I'd make certain nobody else ever found out."

"You ever *try* flying?"

". . . I mean really—when you were fully awake."

"Why not?"

"Why not?"

"Seems to me that when something is suggested again and again on an unconscious level, a person should at least want to put it to a conscious test, just out of curiosity."

And Proctor heard his own voice answering weakly: "I'd feel ridiculous."

He kicked violently at the sand. Of course he'd feel ridiculous! And if he were imbecilic enough to run, cast himself forward in the air—

". . . A person should at least want to put it to a conscious test."

He swayed, restored his balance and laughed. That was it! Delayed, the effects of the Scotch were snowballing on him now. Once before, when he had had too much, inebriation had lurked in the wings, then exploded like a storm.

But the footprints *were* there—all except Sandra's leading to the rock.

"Why not? . . . Why not? . . . Seems to me . . . a person should at least want to put it to a conscious test."

Finally Proctor answered the goading voice, raging at himself as well as Erasmus: "Well—damn it! —why not?"

For once and for all and get it over with and spend the rest of his life laughing at what a great, pitiable fool he had been, testing—one, two, three—to see whether he could, after all, soar away from himself on the breath of the wind.

He steadied, took two halting steps forward, started to break into a run, then pulled up sharply. He'd be damned if—

"Why not?" Erasmus seemed to demand again.

Suddenly resigned to his own idiocy, he sprinted up the face of a dune, down its other slope, thrust his arms out and hurled himself into a horizontal attitude.

His shoulder hit first, digging into the sand, and then his face plowed under. He came up spitting grit.

Well, that was that.

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No, it wasn't! Hadn't he said "for once and for all"? He'd only laugh all the more uproariously at himself if he nursed along the reservation that perhaps he hadn't tried hard enough.

Up again. Trot down the slope toward the beach. Shift into a run. Arms out. Dive forward—no! Not now. More speed first. More. More. Fine. That's it. *Now!*

Plop.

Proctor rolled over and sat up, brushing sand from his face. He had been to Midway once, had watched the albatross starting their migratory flight northward after earthbound months of mating and nesting. They hadn't been given the alternate name "gooney bird" without cause. For almost invariably they failed to generate flying speed during their first running attempt at launching themselves. And they ended up a humiliated, disheveled heap of collapsing wings and clawing legs as they tumbled head over tail and wallowed in the dirt.

Up once more. Spit out the sand and try again. One last and final time. Then he could go back to the party and—

But even as he started his run, toward the cliff this time, he caught sight of a patch of white, half hidden by the rock on his right.

Puzzlement checked his stride, and he headed toward the boulder. Sandra came from concealment, head inclined guiltily.

"I—I was watching and—" she began, then started over again. "I came up from the beach and—you see—I—oh, Frank, you'll never do it *that* way!"

"But I did it last night, didn't I?" he blurted out before he realized it would sound as preposterous as what the girl had just said.

"Yes. Because you thought you were dreaming. It came naturally, without effort. But now you're telling yourself you can't do it. And your doubt will win out."

She stood before him and the moon climbed higher into the sky above her left shoulder. Sea spray swept up over the precipice, forming a soft, misty corona about her braided hair. Braided to accommodate flight?

Suddenly she didn't appear beautiful any longer, and he started to turn away as sobriety overtook him. She seemed to mock everything that was sane and orderly in his world.

But he paused for a last, calmly appraising look. She *was* beautiful. And her expression was one of pleading sincerity, almost desperate persuasion. No, he couldn't deny her overwhelming attractiveness, or the affinity he felt for the girl despite everything else.

"You can do it, Frank! You did it before!"

"I only dreamed—"

"No, it was real. I let you *think*

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it was a dream when I saw you had wrapped yourself in that explanation. I let you think it because I didn't know what else to do. If I had suggested otherwise, you would have laughed cruelly and we never would have seen each other again."

Logic wedged into his thoughts and he did laugh, harshly.

"There. See?" She was hurt.

"All right, so you soloed years ago and now you're up for your instructor's rating. If that's the case, then *show me!*"

She walked over to the edge of the cliff and stared down. "It wouldn't do any good."

"Try me and see."

"Don't you understand? If I did that, it might only have the opposite effect. You'd make yourself believe you were dreaming again—or drunk. Or you'd doubt your sanity. Or you'd run off in horror, and we'd never see each other any more."

He drew back, resentful over her elusiveness. "Is there any reason why we should?"

"Do I have to spell that out too? I thought you'd understand that above everything else. There are others like me—like us. Dad, although he hasn't been able to in years. Mother, before she died. We know another couple, upstate, who found each other like dad and mom did. They discovered me one night, and the five of us were able to touch hands. They know of one other. And they're still looking. We all are. Why, there may even be other groups."

She paused and turned her back on him so she could face the sea. He went around in front of her and didn't notice that the spray, swirling up over the precipice from the pounded crags below, was pasting his sleeves to his skin.

"Eventually a chain will be linked together," she went on, looking down at the surging waters. "Some day, perhaps hundreds of years in the future, there will be many of us. And by then it may be a different world. People may no longer fear and hate the things they refuse to believe."

She hesitated once more and stared up into his face. "Our responsibility is to pass on the seed—down through the generations—until that day arrives—regardless of anything else."

"Where does the seed come from?"

"We don't know. Maybe it would be just as useless to ask where the capacity for inventiveness comes from. Maybe they'll study it some day and supply the answer."

He wanted to believe the girl—almost fervently. The attraction that he had felt for her was there once more, back in full force. It was as though a magnetic bond existed between them, drawing its driving force from the strange heri-

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tage which she claimed they shared together.

He reached out for her shoulder, but she forced his hand back to his side.

"Frank—there *is* one way you can prove it to yourself."

"How?"

She gestured out over the precipice.

And, incredulous, he said, "You mean—"

She nodded. "Dad prepared the way for you this morning. He tried to lay down a carpet of reasonableness, to take some of the edge off your hostility to the idea. He told you about two air crew members. With them the ability came instinctively when they found themselves in great danger. That's the only way for you too."

He glanced over his shoulder at the raging sea. So close. Yet so far down. And the rocks, all along the base of the coastal ridge, were thrusting up from the water like jagged spears.

"It's the only way for some of us who have the ability," she added, her voice low and sober. "The fledgling has to be shoved from its nest, in some cases."

Then an awful realization exploded upon him and he understood—fully. Now he recoiled from the girl with a great sense of disbelief and horror.

Somehow Phyllis had a hand in this. It was confusing and difficult, but he could almost fit the pieces together. Some of them, anyway. Phyllis wanted out, desperately enough to do anything that wouldn't jeopardize her claim on his estate. The whole thing had been contrived. Every calculated effort had been aimed at capitalizing upon his imagination. At getting him, while half drunk presumably, to hurl himself over the cliff.

It wasn't easy to fit last night's dream into the picture puzzle. Unless the girl—and he would have to assume that both she and her father were hired conspirators—unless the girl had spoken softly of flying while he slept and had induced the dream. Then—

Sandra started her lunge so unexpectedly that he had no time to react before her hands jolted him full in the chest.

Then he was flailing over backwards, falling, falling. And the sea was a fury of surging might and crashing sound, climbing thunderously in his ears.

In the brief moment before he began gaining violent momentum, he realized how she had done it—the trick with her footprints in the sand.

After he had taken her home last night she had simply returned to the rock, retracing her original tracks. Then she had backed away, carefully filling in and brushing out the evidence of both approaches.

In his vertiginous gyrations his head gravitated downward and his

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spine wrenched painfully as he kicked and clawed. Neck stretched back to its fullest, he watched the crags lance up out of the savage, frothing sea.

Then, unaware that he had ordered the reaction, he found himself thrusting his arms out perpendicular to his body.

A gentle force took hold along his rigid hands, his biceps, his shoulders. It firmed—much like the lift on a wing's camber as it gained flying speed, he imagined.

And it whipped his sleeves about his skin and brought his body around into a straight, organized attitude while his plunge was transformed into a sweeping curve, as though he were a plane pulling out of a power dive.

His shoes clipped the surface of a breaking wave and he bottomed out of his trajectory between two half-submerged rocks.

Then he was soaring up, up along the face of the cliff, its moist, irregular surface coruscating with reflections of the moon over the sea.

Surging aloft now in the palpable updraft of the onshore wind, he climbed past the top of the bluff. And, in the fleeting moment of his passage, he saw Sandra standing there, her face soft and grateful and all full of pride over his accomplishment, happiness for him.

Still he went up, up, drinking in the exhilaration of his flight, reveling in the realization of an impossible ambition. The coastal ridge dwindled into smallness below and blended in with the beach on either side. And he knew that Wentworth's lodge, together with everything it represented, was actually as insignificant as it now seemed. A meaningless patch of harsh light and discordant sound, suspended as though on an otherwise beautiful canvas, between the glistening sea and the quiet, shadowy land beyond.

He leveled off, wheeling up and over, and began a nimble, spiraling descent over the brilliant strip of beach.

Then he was aware of Sandra's nearness. From an even higher altitude, she was darting down in front of him. She brushed lightly against his outstretched arm and broke off in a sharp swerve to the right, still descending.

He followed and she plunged even more swiftly, peeling off in a steep, banked turn. Then the beach swept up to meet them and they checked their downrush, gliding along above the shore line.

He drew closer, flying with his fingertips brushing frequently against hers. And he started to ask, "Of what use—if it has to be done secretly?"

But he didn't have to. For, intoxicated with the rapture of his experience, he knew it was a goodness in itself—a sheer delight that made existence infinitely more

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gratifying simply because it was there.

She beckoned with a finger and pulled away from the beach, heading inland and veering southward above the bushes. She curved up over a power line and dropped back down again, following the asphalt road as it climbed the coastal ridge.

Ahead shone the tail-lights of a closed car. It added the intensity of its own headbeams to the moon's effulgence. Swiftly they overtook the vehicle. But Sandra made certain that they neither pulled out ahead of it nor approached too close until they were directly above its top.

The climbing highway leveled off atop the ridge, and they passed the road leading off to Wentworth's lodge. Proctor broke off abruptly and, skimming treetops, headed directly for the roof.

Sandra came along, calling softly after him, "No, Frank! Not too close! We mustn't be seen!"

But it was too late. For he was already breaking out over the terrace, and the beat of the stereo and the shouts and delighted shrieks were assailing him from below as the lights of the lodge flared harshly in his eyes.

He was certain, though, that he hadn't been seen. For the tempo of the party went undisturbed.

But he would have to make a straight-line retreat that would take him away from the danger area as swiftly as possible.

He dived directly at the edge of the precipice, dropping toward the sea but remaining close to the cliff.

His withdrawal had been so rapid that he wasn't even aware of the single, horrified scream that had risen above the din of the party. Nor could he know, then, that Phyllis, her back to the sea at the edge of the cliff, had been the only one to catch a brief, terrifying glimpse of his flashing form.

And, by the time her hurtling body had landed among the crags far below, he was out over the beach, climbing sharply into the moonlight, with Sandra once more in close attendance.

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## COMING NEXT MONTH

***LINES OF POWER*, a short novel by SAMUEL R. DELANY**

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*It has been said that science can accomplish almost anything if it is wanted badly enough. The Amodeo Foundation wanted uncle Angelo resurrected, and it had the right combination: immense financial and persuasive resources and a leader who believed that his idiot aunt could make an H-bomb if she had the right gimmick.*

# DEAD TO RIGHTS

## *by R. C. FitzPatrick*

ANGELO AMODEO WAS A MAN OF imposing substance who did nothing good for a living, but whose living was very good. So good was Angelo's living in fact, that it made his liver bad . . . and his kidneys bad . . . and his bladder was bad to begin with. In general, his health became as bad as his morals, and the doctors decreed a halt.

"Angelo," they said. "Angelo. No more smoking."

And Angelo grunted and said, "All right."

"Angelo," they said, "Angelo. No more drinking."

And Angelo grumbled but said, "All right."

"Angelo," they said, "Angelo. No more gambling."

And Angelo thought for a long, long time before he finally said, "All right."

"And Angelo," they said, "Angelo. No more women."

And Angelo said, "What the Hell, I might as well be dead!"

So he died.

Twice. And almost simultaneously. Nature decreed the first passing. Damon Donlevy, Angelo's heir apparent, ordered the second. The doctors had wired Angelo for hernia. Donlevy had Angelo wired for sound.

And in the game of pick-up-styx that followed, everybody scored. Charon supplied the boat for the passage; Donlevy rowed him across, and the undercover-angels lining the shore cheered on and on and on.

The T-man said, "What's the use? Donlevy puts down every cent he makes. Every lousy penny!"

The G-man said, "We can't touch him, he's strictly local. Pennsylvania local maybe, but he



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wouldn't scratch his fanny if there was a federal law against it.

The governor's office said nothing officially. Unofficially they said, "Another 1,000 tickets for the Party Ball? You're the best, Mr. Donlevy. The best!"

Somewhere East of Suez—Suez, West Virginia—a syndicate sandman named Benny O'Toole made love to the sheriff's daughter. Now don't ask what Benny was doing in Suez, driving through probably. And don't ask what he did with the sheriff's daughter, probably driving through. Maybe he thought the country stuff was better.

Needless to say, he thought she was eighteen.

Needless to say, she wasn't.

Needless to say, they frown on strangers doing that to a sheriff's daughter in West Virginia. And when Benny's real smart city lawyer saw the situation, he shook his head sadly. "Benny my boy, you're going to get twenty years. And if you're stupid enough to live that long, you'll serve every stinking day!"

"No hope?"

"No hope!"

"There's always hope," said the ever original Benny. "The Luck-of-the-Irish is an Ace-in-the-Hole. Get Washington!"

Benny wanted to make a deal. He figured he'd have a better chance against his "own" than bucking honest screws in a West Virginia penitentiary. Benny had a point.

And Damon Donlevy got the point. Sideways. The government had him dead to rights. Boom-Boom Benny O'Toole kept records; he called it "life assurance"—but not on Donlevy's life. There was nary a prayer for leniency, clemency, pardon or parole. Damon was in. For life!

Damon met the prison chaplain in the course of being processed.

"Donlevy," said the chaplain, "I won't moralize. You're hard, but you're practical. So am I—practical! So look at this practically. You were happy in the life you led; you had no need for faith. But that card game's busted now. It's a better shot—not for me, not for society, but for you—if you play what you're dealt and don't beef."

"Bat crap."

"Hear me out! You can't go back. Nobody can. But we all get two picks; up or down. Only a free-hole bucks a flop game. The tickets I deal give you a lock on forever, but your lousy strippers got you tagged with money in the pot."

"Bat crap."

"Be practical. Be hard and tough. But be practical! You're here, and your only out is a new hand. A new life! And only the All-Mighty can help; you must be reborn. You must be resurrected as He was resurrected."

"Mouse manure!" said Damon.

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"Youse oughtn'ta be wise to the chaplain," the check-in trusty said. "Maybe you're boss ghee outside, but in here it ain't smart. An' besides, he's an all right guy. He give you a break 'cause you're new, but don't pop off no more."

"I get prayed all over?"

"You get lumped all over."

"The chaplain?"

"The cons! Like I said, he's good people. You don't pay attention? So don't pay attention! But be polite."

"So I'll be polite." Damon shrugged. "Only you get born again! I figure once through the course wraps it up."

"Not, *born,*" said the trusty. "*Reborn.* I don't see no difference, but the chaplain says it's there. Not like a baby, but ressuseration like in the Book."

"Whadda you mean, ressuseration?"

"Like I said, I don't see no difference." The trusty lowered his voice. "I don't listen at him either. I just point my ears. But I'm polite!" He scratched himself. "Ressuseration? That give you an itch? Them limp laws the Old Yids wrote is supposed to give you a free ticket—anything you find you can heist. The chaplain says they're all in the Book, if you're interested."

"I'm innerested," said Damon.

Damon read the Book. And then he kicked it around in his mind, and his mind was unique; a wonderland where connections made all things possible, and everything had a price, and his idiot aunt could make an H-bomb if she had the right gimmick.

Damon sent for his lawyer and his second-in-command. "How much I got? And how much can you lay your hands on?"

Damon's second-in-command was also named Damon—Damon Amodeo. Angelo had been his uncle. And he'd known Donlevy had elevated uncle long before the government. Damon-A was even able to muster regret—for Damon-D, not for uncle Angelo. The government was lousing up his time table. He planned a Gaelic goodby for Damon-the-D, but not for a few years. He needed those years to master his trade.

"Big-D," said Damon-A, "you gotta believe I'd pull your time if those lousy Feds would let me."

"Damon," said the lawyer, "I'm sorry, but we've tried. We can't possibly buy your way out."

"Not for me," said Damon. "For Little-D's uncle. You ever heard of the Day of Resturrection?"

"A holiday?" asked Damon-the-A. "For uncle Angelo?"

Donlevy answered him with a short, disgusted glance.

"Do you mean," asked the lawyer, "the Final Day of Judgment when the dead shall rise?"

"I don't know about no judgment, but I mean like the stiffs will have it made."

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"Like zombies?" asked Damon-A.

"No!" snarled Damon-D, "I don't mean like no sonofabitching zombies. You got a set of brains your uncle would of traded in. I mean like this guy here!" Damon shoved the Book under Little-D's nose.

"Have you gotten religion?" The lawyer was genuinely shocked.

"Hell no," said Damon. "You don't get the picture. They nailed me for murder, right? For squeezing uncle, right? Well, suppose uncle ain't dead? Suppose he's resurrected? So now he ain't dead; so who murdered him?"

"I don't understand."

"What's to understand? If Amodeo ain't dead, he ain't murdered. Simple!"

"I don't know."

"So I know," said Damon-A. "So nobody! That's who chopped him, nobody! If he ain't murdered, he ain't dead. And if he ain't dead, he ain't murdered. And if he ain't murdered, then they got no right to stab Big-D."

"It seems a valid point," said the lawyer.

"Point, schmoint!" said Damon-D. "Set it up. A business maybe. Maybe a commission. Fix it!"

"A foundation?"

"Right! A foundation. The Amodeo Foundation. Get uncle up, and get me out."

"The heel bone is connected to the ankle bone, and the ankle bone connected to the shin bone . . ." Dr. Holbrook explained carefully, ". . . only we have no shin bones."

"Make 'em!" said Damon-the-A.

"I'm afraid we can't."

"You better be afraid if you can't."

"You don't understand. Silver is adequate for plates, and stainless steel for pins. And nylon is used as socketing for joints. But a whole bone . . . ?"

"I've heard Jameson's having fantastic results at Chemline," Holbrook's assistant offered.

"Who's Jameson?" asked Damon-the-A.

"Best biochemist in the field."

"Get him!"

"He wouldn't be interested," said Holbrook reluctantly.

"I'll get him," said Damon—A.

"Press the switch, Doctor," Jameson whispered. "Yours was the final contribution."

Holbrook's hand was unsteady. "I'm afraid," he confessed. "I feel as though He must be watching."

"I feel as though He has given approval," Jameson answered.

"I feel as though I'm gonna puke," said Damon-A, and pressed the switch.

The figure sat upright. He did not rub his eyes nor shake his head to clear it. He did not yawn, growl, stretch, snort, scratch, nor break wind as most men do after sleep. And his had been a long sleep.

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He stepped majestically down and said, "Floogue!"

When no response was forthcoming, he smiled compassionately, "Skleege."

The stunned silence continued. The figure assumed an expression of understanding and added gently, "Laugle belchflap lamya."

The silence became unbearable.

The figure frowned. "Dooyam kooze? Floogle belchflap arf arf!"

The awe-inspired silence was replaced by a soundless sorrow that was even more dreadful.

"Pray!" Holbrook pleaded. "Pray it's a foreign language." He turned to the only intelligible Amodeo present. "Go hire the finest linguists, and a few good cryptologists to boot. This may be more of a problem than bringing him back to life!"

It took months of tedious labor, and at the end it was the artificial Amodeo who spoke English. The linguists could not comprehend ". . . belchflap lamyam doo."

Holbrook was chosen spokesman for the foundation. "Are you . . ." he cleared his throat, ". . . are you Angelo Amodeo?"

"There is no angel, Amodeo," said the figure.

"He said *Angelo,* not *angel,*" said the non-angelic Amodeo.

"It hardly seems possible, even now," Jameson whispered.

"All things are possible for those who have some knowledge of the unknowable wisdom."

"Then . . . then you are Amodeo?"

The figure shrugged. "Is not everyone Amodeo?"

"Answer the question," snapped Damon-the-A. "Are you my uncle, Angelo Amodeo?"

"What a lovely name," the figure exclaimed, "Amodeo! That's a corruption, but of the heart; it means *I love God* in one of your tongues."

Damon-A was unimpressed. "You my uncle Angie?"

"Vaguely, vaguely I encompass such a one."

"Vague, schmague! You are or you ain't."

"Is the question of such importance? In a continued and continuing existence one dwells on so many planes. . . ."

"Just answer the question and don't get wise!"

"But the question precludes a basically materialistic answer for the corporeal non-materialism of abstract. . . ."

"Answer the goddamned question," snarled Damon-A.

"Peace. Peace. The question is not damned. It raises conjecture on validity. Yes. And such searching after empty erudition might well be found wonderless—for what is aught but wonder—but it is not damned."

"You say an awful lot and don't say nothing!"

"I say what comes to mind. You will find, in time, that individual beingness means nothing in the al-

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together not-beingness of sublime. . . ."

"Just answer the question," Damon-A pleaded.

"I," said the figure, "am yclept Ixlix Globul. But if it will please you, I will be whomsoever you wish me to be."

"Cut that out! You stick to a straight story, or them government shysters will turn you right side up."

"I can only answer as I must," said Ixlix Globul. "I am many things then, as I was many things now. And such as I am in the never-was-to-be. Aimless wonderings as to who or why interest only the pointless minds of man."

The pointless minds of man decreed a trial. Well, not a trial, but Donlevy wanted out, and the government wanted him in; so they did the best they could. It is a testament that anything was done at all. The Catholic Church, the Southern Baptists, the Communist Party, the WCTU, and the Luminiferous Society of Doxologists (LSD Harmony Chapter, California Confederation) all applied horrendous pressure. It wasn't that they cared about Donlevy. They were not concerned with Donlevy at all. They were concerned with Ixlix Globul, or rather, a lack of Ixlix Globul. They denied the existence of Globul. And they meant it when they denied his existence!

But the government used the most telling logic. "Your Honor," they said to the judge before they assigned him, "if it were shown that murder could be uncommitted, then there wouldn't be much use for judges, now would there? We wouldn't want to influence you, but Donlevy stays in prison!"

"That," said the judge, "is a brilliant presentation."

There were 2000 people in the courthouse. There were 200 in the courtroom. The courthouse, jail, and license bureau combined had not been designed for 200 people.

The eminent jurist tapped his gavel—and rapped his gavel—and pounded his gavel against a marble block. "Now hear me! If I yearned to be a stonemason, I'd wield a sledge! Bailiff! I want silence!"

Loud silence prevailed. With the understandable exception of interest in dirty old men and nice little girls, nothing had quite so intrigued the public as this "not-murder" trial. Not a soul inside dared chance being outside.

"Now," said the judge, "we'll proceed. Since this is, in effect, a grand jury in reverse, I think the . . . ah, plaintiff? . . . should first present his case with the state acting in rebuttal. Burden of proof is here lodged with the accused, or rather, since the government is the accused, with the accuser. Thus, we will hear from the plaintiff."

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Donlevy's lawyer stood erect. "Your choice of words is excellent, your Honor. We are here in a plaintiff capacity; for while my client was found guilty of a crime, and has been paying the penalty ever since, we now find that no crime has been committed . . . was committed," he amended.

"That's patently ridiculous. Do you contend that your client did not commit murder?"

"That is our case. How can he have?" The lawyer pointed to Ixlix Globul. "There sits his victim now!"

"Nonsense!" said the judge. "If I break a lamp and then have it repaired, I still broke it."

"True. But we're not talking of lamps. By legal definition murder is an irrevocable act. If my client murdered someone, that someone is dead. And if that someone is not dead, he was not murdered. *Ipso facto,* my client is not guilty of murder. We rest our case."

"Spare me your ipso facto's," said the judge, "we're not on television. Proceed!"

"I have proceeded," said the lawyer. He smiled like an elephant bird on the morning after. "I'm only a backwoods barrister avoiding complications. I have nothing else to add."

The judge ran a sweaty palm across his face. "I should have been prepared for this!" He turned to the attorney-general. "What does the government have to say?"

"Why nothing. I'm as much a country boy as my august compeer here. Why complicate things? If counsel is correct, then Donlevy is not guilty. Only," he paused, "that," and he pointed to the *corpus animus,* "is not Angelo Amodeo! That is Ixlix Globul. Or so he claims. But whether a Globul, a *golem,* or a voice from the void —it has no bearing on this case— it is manifest he is not Amodeo."

"Now hold on there! That is Amodeo."

"Can you prove it?"

The defense attorney was nonplussed. He turned to the bench, "Your Honor . . . ?"

"Prove it," the judge said happily.

"Your Honor! We are not prepared. We assumed Amodeo's existence was not the matter at issue. Whether murder was committed, or was not committed, or was uncommitted is one thing . . . but . . . I need . . . time," he finished lamely.

"You shall have it," said the now jovial jurist. (He had also assumed as the defense assumed; the attorney-general's gambit pleased him no end.) "One whole month. And Mr. Donlevy?" he pointed a friendly finger at Damon. "You stay in jail. This trial is recessed."

Interest should have remained at fever pitch. That it did not can be laid to Ixlix Globul. He

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preached cornball, sacrilegious, un-American ideas:

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS

"Let your sister marry one! I got a right to pick my relatives."

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

"Only if her old man ain't home."

DO NOT STEAL

"Listen! They give food away. Who's to know you got a job? You gonna tell 'em?"

WORSHIP AS YOU PLEASE

"My prayers are for those lost souls who deny the Only Faith. But compassion is really cruelty for those who refuse salvation. . . ."

PEACE

"A piece a day keeps the doctor away."

This was the bait that Ixlix used, but people refused to nibble. Ouroboros was not on the hook—he held the end of the pole.

Court reconvened with considerably less fanfare than before.

"All right," said the judge with a distasteful glance at Donlevy's lawyer, "start."

The lawyer put Dr. Holbrook on the stand. "Did you, or did you not, use the remains of Angelo Amodeo?"

"Yes, we did," said the doctor. "The family granted permission."

"I'm sure they did," said the lawyer. "Any God-fearing, wholesome American family would desire the return of a dear departed."

"EEuuyurk!" said the attorney-general.

"Your Honor?" said the defense attorney.

"He said, 'EEuuyurk'," said the judge. "Continue."

"Is that what you told the family doctor? That you would restore Angelo to his mother's bosom?"

"I imagine that is what was said. I was not engaged in that end of the project."

"But that was the object of your project, was it not? To bring Angelo Amodeo back to life?"

"Yes it was."

"Did you succeed?"

"Yes we did."

"Your witness," said the lawyer.

"Dr. Holbrook," said the attorney-general, "did you use stainless steel in this creation?"

"Oh yes, a good many pounds."

"And silver?"

"One hundred forty-four and three sixty-eighths ounces. Approximately!" Holbrook had been hard-pressed by the foundation accountants.

"And plastics?"

"Certainly."

"And tissue grafts from others?"

"Oh much more than tissue," said Holbrook. "As a matter of fact, the liver was transplanted whole from a female orangutan. Fascinating! You see. . . ."

"I object!"

"Overruled."

"How much is Amodeo?" the attorney-general asked.

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"I don't understand," said Holbrook understandingly.

"I object!" screamed the lawyer.

"Why?" said the judge. "The composition of Mr. Globul intrigues me."

"I ask again, doctor," said the attorney-general. "How much of Ixlix Globul is Angelo Amodeo?"

"Oh, roughly ten percent I'd guess, probably a little less."

"I object!"

The judge smiled pleasantly.

The attorney-general continued. "When you say that you succeeded do you mean that you accomplished exactly what you set out to do? I mean 'precisely' what you set out to do?"

"Heavens no. No scientific experiment ever does that. But we had meaningful results in our general area of interest."

"But did you bring Angelo Amodeo back to life? Please be explicit. Is that . . ." he pointed to Ixlix, ". . . medically and scientifically speaking, the same Angelo Amodeo as the man who was murdered? Did you, in other words, resurrect him?"

"Well as to that we can only conjecture, you see. . . ."

"Thank you, Dr. Holbrook, that will be all."

"Is that your Uncle Angelo?"

She hiked her skirt still higher, cracked her gum, and muttered, "Yeah."

"Is that Angelo Amodeo?"

"Couldn't be," said Boom-Boom Benny O'Toole. "When I bomb 'em there ain't enough left to embalm."

"I didn't ask you if it could be! I said, is he?"

"Nah," said Benny, "nah, it ain't. Angelo woulda come acrost the table at me."

"Are you Angelo Amodeo?" asked the lawyer.

"Oh, I do, indeed I do." said Ixlix.

"By that I take it to mean that you are Angelo?"

"Not Angelo. Amodeo!"

"Then in other words, you are Amodeo! Thank you very much."

"Now you just hold on there," said the judge. "Mr. Globul," he turned to the witness. "You deny you're Angelo, and then claim to be Amodeo. Please explain yourself."

"Angelo means *angel,* and I'm far from that. But Amodeo signifies *I love God,* and I do, I most certainly do."

"Thank you!"

"Hrrumph," said the lawyer. Now, Mr. Amodeo. . . ."

"Objection."

"Sustained," said the judge. "Counselor, you may call the witness Mr. Globul, Ixlix, Ixlix Globul, or Etaoin Shrdlu if it strikes your fancy. But you may not call him Mr. Amodeo, or Angelo, or Angelo Amodeo until his identity

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has been firmly established. You *do* understand this court was created for that specific purpose?"

"Perfectly, your Honor. But the witness has just admitted to being Amodeo."

"And Ixlix Globul," said the attorney-general.

"And 'encompassing all'," said the judge. "We have clarified what he means by Amodeo. Please don't quibble."

"Yes, your Honor. Hey!" said the lawyer resentfully. "You! Have you ever been Angelo Amodeo?"

"Yes," said Ixlix, "haven't we all?"

"Stop that! Your Honor, please instruct the witness not to qualify his answers."

"The witness is so instructed. Mr. Globul? You will answer with a simple *Yes* or *No* unless otherwise directed."

"But such an answer will not answer," Ixlix objected.

"It will have to serve. You must observe the law."

The lawyer went on. "Now sir, obeying the court, are you now, or have you ever been, Angelo Amodeo?"

"I am not and always will be. As I've explained, in the universal aspects of individual togetherness. . . ."

"I give up," said the lawyer.

"Are you Angelo Amodeo?" the attorney-general asked.

"Always."

"Yes! or no!" the judge roared.

"Yes I'm not."

"I'll hold you in contempt of court," the judge thundered.

"I hold nothing in contempt," said Ixlix. "I respect even the lowliest lilies of the field."

"Respect this court!"

"But I do."

"Then answer."

"But I have," Ixlix explained. "In the separated compatibility of group individuality. . . ."

"Your Honor," the attorney-general interposed, "possibly I can clarify the witness's reticence. Being a Christian, Mr. Globul might feel his answers would cause unhappiness to one party or the other."

"Right and wrong," said Ixlix. "My answers are sufficient unto themselves."

"You are not Christian?"

"Among other things. You may call me all things."

"I'll call you awl prisoner, if you don't obey this court! You have the devil's own skill in evading questions."

"Even devils are one with the Infinite All."

"Are you one with the Infinite All?"

"I am."

"And was Angelo Amodeo one with the Infinite All?"

"Even as you and I."

"Then I put the question to you. Are you Angelo Amodeo?"

"Ask as you will. My answer is Love."

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"And my answer is Law."

"There is a Higher Law."

"Don't preach to me! The law will control you. Or a net shall constrain you. . . ."

"I am constrained by the law of nature."

"You'll be constrained by the law of man!"

"I love the law of man," said Ixlix. "Bless the law of man. I love all things. Bless all things. You, Mr. Jameson, Dr. Holbrook, Mr. Donlevy. . . ." He rose and spread his arms. "Blessed are the. . . ."

"Hold it!" screamed the judge. "Stop right there!" He covered his face with his hands, and even the most biased of the spectators could respect the battle he waged within himself. Finally he said in a shaken voice, "This court will be recessed for fifteen minutes. I must take stock."

The stock was eight years old and eighty-six proof. The judge returned with a determined look upon his face. "I have reached my decisions. Four of them!"

The courtroom was silent.

"One," said the judge. "Angelo Amodeo was a punk. Ixlix Globul is not a punk. He's a happy little butterfly, but he is not a punk."

"Buzz," said the courtroom.

"Two," said the judge. "Granting some remaining remnants of Angelo Amodeo, the parts are not sufficient to constitute the whole."

"Buzz, buzz," said the courtroom.

"Three," said the judge. "We have one being, here claimed by others in the present tense, as a previous being. And, claimed by himself, as a being in the pluperfect future. God help us all! But even were he previously the same being, the interruption of a normal life cycle would make that being two legally distinct individuals."

"Buzz, buzz, buzz," said the courtroom.

"Four!" The judge completed his enumeration. "This court refuses the opportunity of becoming a theological battleground."

"There is but one theology," said Ixlix.

"Shut up!" said the judge judicially. "This court rules that Ixlix Globul is not Angelo Amodeo. It is not concerned about was, or will be. Right now he is not! The prisoner is remanded to custody."

"Buzz," said the courtroom. "Buzz, buzz, buzz."

So Damon Donlevy went back to prison.

And Ixlix Amodeo Globul? Well, after the almost nonexistent notoriety of the trial wore off and after a multiplicity of psychiatrists found him harmless, he was released. After that he preached for awhile, but with a notable lack of success. The last that was heard of him, he was somewhere on the West Coast belchflaping to a lamyam crew of a dozen or so.

There were twelve to be exact.

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# BOOKS

*Guest reviewers this month are Poul Anderson and Gahan Wilson. Judith Merril's column will appear next month.*

HARRY HARRISON HAS BEEN around for a surprising number of years. We aren't usually conscious of how long because, although he is prolific, his growth has been steady rather than spectacular: the result of hard work and experience as well as natural talent. By now he is one of the masters.

THE TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE (Doubleday, $3.95) is probably not among his important books like MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! Or is it? Has sheer fun no importance, or a rattling good story, or solid craftsmanship, or the vivid and accurate re-creation of a vanished era?

Many readers will already have encountered this yarn as an Analog serial under the title "The Time Machined Saga." They will remember it as the hilarious story of a movie company which, setting out to make a Viking epic on the cheap, goes chronokinetically on location in the Orkney Islands, 1000 A.D. Naturally, there are unforeseen difficulties, including the fact that real Vikings aren't a bit like epic Vikings. Confusion piles on confusion until America is discovered and— But I mustn't spoil it for those who haven't read it yet.

Those who have, ought to get the book anyway. Some small emendations have been made, notably in orthography. (Will science fiction magazines ever employ printers with reasonably complete fonts?) But mainly, its rapid pace, its humor made pointed by a sense of tragedy, its evocation of the gusty past, are best appreciated when it is read in one chunk, preferably before a roaring fire with a mug of ale to hand.

Kate Wilhelm is another writer who, constantly improving, has gradually become a major figure in our field. She has some profound things to say, and says them very well indeed. For this reason, considerable though its merits are, I am less willing to overlook the faults of her latest novel than I might be in others. (THE KILLER THING, Doubleday, $3.95.) As ambitious, and in many respects successful an undertaking as this must, in honesty, be praised with faint damns.



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Not that the story is especially complicated or the symbolism especially esoteric. Earth, united with its original colonies Mars and Venus, is spreading its power through the galaxy by ruthless imperialism. A scientist of a conquered planet, a slave laborer albeit with access to a laboratory, makes certain innovative improvements on a mining robot. This is illegal; he is found out; the machine is confiscated and taken to Venus for further development. There, by the logic of its own programming, it becomes a killer. It escapes, leaving a trail of devastation. Most of the story is told in flashbacks, while one man on a barren planet wages his lonely battle against the thing. Meanwhile rumors grow about mysterious Outsiders who have promised to liberate the oppressed worlds. That is about as much as I should reveal here.

Cliché? No. Not when the scenes are so fully realized, especially the burning nightmare of the desert; when the development of the robot into a berserker is such a tour de force of reasoning; when the author's compassion and indignation come through with such unpreachy power.

Then what about the flaws? Some are petty, annoying chiefly because they distract. They include minor technical errors, e.g. in the use of the term "waldo," and bits of unfortunate phrasing, e.g. the "precious supply of available fuel." (When your life depends on the available fuel, you needn't be told it is precious.) More serious, because more jarring, is the depiction, in this day and age, of the old habitable-but-swampy Venus, and the populating of the galaxy with humans, no explanation offered. Or are they human? There appears to be some degree of interfertility with Earthmen, but the author is vague about this, as she is about much else, including those Outsiders who may change the whole course of events.

These things could have been fixed without too much difficulty. But a basic problem would remain. Kate Wilhelm is against war and unfreedom; isn't everybody? Now it is quite legitimate for her to portray Earth of the future as being under some kind of totalitarianism. But unless we are shown how that totalitarianism came about, how it works, what its ethos and mystique are, we aren't being warned against anything real.

Thus, apparently the Earthmen often conquer planets just to get the minerals. Are there no uninhabited globes that could more easily be exploited? Are the natives all and always kicked around, with no attempt made to play them off against each other or get the collaboration of some? Not even the Nazis were that stupid. None of the officers in the book are anything but cardboard Junkers—or Pentagon generals or

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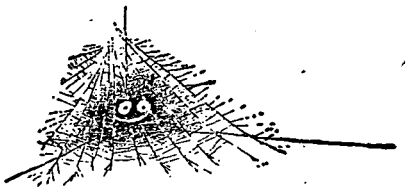
MVD colonels, depending on your political inclinations—except the hero, and he is not as fully developed as one would like. It might have helped to keep his friend alive a while longer on that desert world, so that the two of them could have interacted humanly and revealed their personalities while being hunted by the robot.

If I have gone on at greater length about the faults of this novel than about its virtues, that is only because the latter are so well able to speak for themselves. Do read THE KILLER THING, and do think about it. You will look forward as eagerly as I to Kate Wilhelm's next.

I'll give you an added inducement to buy the hardcover now. The front of the dust jacket shows an unusually good design; but the back shows an even better one.

—POUL ANDERSON



## THE DARK CORNER

The first Lee Brown Coye illustration I ever saw was in the March '45 issue of *Weird Tales*, and it was a beaut. It showed no less than eleven hideously rotting cadavers, and it proved conclusively, once and for all, that old W.T. had finally found an artist who knew his stiffs.

Not that the magazine had ever lacked for talented craftsmen. Not at all. There was Boris Dolgov, master of whispy, thing-containing mist; there was Matt Fox, a fascinating primitive who drew reptillian demons; there was Virgil Finlay, with his crow quill pen and scratchboard, and there were others. Oh yes.

But now I know them all to be mere fantasts. Innocents. Their work might be pleasingly spooky, even mildly chilling, but you never had to stifle a gasp of horror as you turned the pages and came upon it whilst sitting next to a fat lady on the bus. With Lee Brown Coye's, by God, you did.

The puffings of the strangled, the subtleties of gashed scalps, the careless patterns caused by spewing blood—Coye showed it to you lovingly and you knew, Lord help you, that this was the way such things must really look. Rats did chew in just that fashion, and the drying corpse would list precisely so.

Coye illustrated August Derleth's excellent collection of horror stories, SLEEP NO MORE (Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.), back in '44, and the two of them have been associated, on and off, ever since. The latest result of this collaboration is THREE TALES OF TERROR by H.

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P. Lovecraft, published by Derleth's Arkham House, and containing fifteen illustrations by Coye. These have been printed on coated paper and set into the book, which goes a way towards explaining the $7.50 price. If you are a Lovecraft or/and a Coye buff, you will enjoy it.

The first two stories, "The Color Out of Space" and "The Dunwhich Horror," are the most successfully illustrated. The scene for both is H.P.L.'s version of the interior backwoods of Massachusetts and concerns the doings of his weird rubes. Coye exploits this underlying unity nicely, making inventively surrealistic use of rustic props. Tree roots suck from above, nocturnal insects hang gross and unexplained, skunk cabbage flourishes evilly, and there is a lovely whippoorwill.

The third story, however, "The Thing on the Doorstep," throws this thematic approach out of whack, as it takes place in coastal towns, mostly in Innsmouth, and its main characters are sophisticated, worldly people. Floating twigs and night moths go well enough with Wibur Whateley, but not with the likes of an Asenath Waite. As if to make up for this malfunction in the book, Coye has snuck in an excellent endpiece and a grand glimpse of Witch-Haunted Arkham. Neither of them have anything much to do with any of the THREE TALES, but they made the ichor beat a little faster in my veins and I am grateful for them.

Speaking of Lovecraft, there is only one author who, with H.P.L.'s permission, shares a byline with him on a story ("Through the Gates of the Silver Key"), and that's E. Hoffman Price, and that's quite a distinction. They dreamed up the basic idea in New Orleans while consuming quarts of chile con carne, which leads one to speculate thoughtfully yet again on the relationship of digestion to literature.

Price thought up quite a few stories on his own, and Arkham House has brought some of them out in a collection entitled STRANGE GATEWAYS (1967, $4.00). These originally appeared in *Weird Tales* and other pulps, and you can tell pretty much when they were written and what kind of market they were written for. However dated his technique and approach, the thing which made him one of the biggest response-getters in pulpdom is clearly visible.

Price had a way of coming up with central concepts that stayed with you long after you'd forgotten the details of the story itself. The basic idea of one in this collection, "Bones for China" (an elderly Chinese comes back to the old country carrying his father's dry, self-rustling remains around in a fu-

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neral pot, trying to find a suitable place to bury them while violent modern war rages all around), has remained floating around in my head ever since I read it originally back in the Paleozoic era. Now that I reread the actual story I find it full of irritating mannerisms and whatnot, but these will pass away and the afterglow will return, I am sure. And other tales I read here for the first time will doubtless have a kindred effect.

One story, "Graven Image," is by far the best of the lot, and could stand well in most any company.

Some of the stories should really have been left at peace in their magazines. The rest are for readers who are familiar with, and know how to handle, vintage *Weird Tales* material. Not everyone has the art.

For those who do have that art, and I mean one hundred per cent, let me recommend without reservation Seabury Quinn's THE PHANTOM FIGHTER (Arkham House, 1966) which stars (*Parbleu!*) Jules de Grandin, psychic sleuth, and his staunch biographer, Dr. Trowbridge, bless his heart. Watch them battle "The Corpse-Master" (*Sapristi!*); observe them unravel "The Doom of the House of Phipps" (*Nom d'un asperge!*); and follow them as they track the *thing* which prowls the grounds of the Sedgemore Country Club (*Voila!*)! Have a ball.

—GAHAN WILSON

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*"Where are you* taking *me?"*

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*Bruce McAllister is a young writer, presently a student at UCLA. He recently told us that he has reconsidered a decision to go into TV writing. "Gore Vidal* et *mass media* al *speak of the decline of the short story and novel, and the rise of TV and movies. If that's so, I'd rather go down with the ship—John Barth, Updike, Malamud, and most sf writers are very respectable captains, and the novel-short story ship seems admirably buoyant at the moment." Mr. McAllister has been published in the sf field before, but this is his first story for us. TV's loss; our gain.*

# WITHOUT A DOUBT DREAM

by Bruce McAllister

ANTONIO HAD SEATED HIMSELF at the dining room table, closed his eyes in concentration, and started on a new deck of Giocca playing cards when he heard Alba scream.

Kicking the chair back, he ran through the kitchen's smell of bread, out the back door, through the pink and yellow snapdragons, through the lichen-encrusted granite garden wall, and among the umbrella pines where Alba had taken another breath and was screaming on a higher key.

At a distance her distorted face and wide eyes caught his attention first. When he reached her, the desert beyond the pines silhouetted her face, darkening it, and the desert captured his vision.

At the edge of the pines, where a carpet of green grass had rested quietly the day before, desert sands now hovered and reddish dust swirled.

He grabbed Alba, covered her face with his arms, and stared with burning eyes and open mouth into the hot sands that always before had been the rolling countryside of Perugia. From his years in the Middle School sprang the face of his aunt Pupa, her faint mustache, and her words: "An open mouth catches flies."

Antonio shut his mouth but continued to stare.

The desert sands gnawed at the grass under the pines, noisily abrading the naked pine trunks



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like an invisible emery board. The heat made the desert waver liquidly, and Antonio could see that nothing but sand existed between the pines and the horizon.

Antonio led his wife back to the villa and instructed her to stay there. Proceeding to the opposite side of the house, he surveyed the desert from the porch, then walked around the edge of the pines, returning at last to the point where Alba had first seen the desert.

Dust clouds hung over the horizon in all directions, and the desert surrounded the villa and a hundred-odd pines in very nearly a perfect circle.

Aunt Pupa used to say, "When your tummy is being bitten by fear —think of it as a fight in your tummy. Calm courage fighting fear. Courage is Giuseppe Garibaldi; so he must win." Antonio dropped his mind into his stomach and saw the fight. The Black King of Clubs was wrestling with the Red King of Diamonds. He thought: Garibaldi always wore red when he fought at Quarto and Volturno; so the red is courage and must win.

So the Black King grew even darker, with a slimy face like Antonio always imagined the face of death to be. The Red King had a halo-crown and stars for eyes— and Garibaldi's soldiers danced on his cape.

The wrestling continued, and Antonio felt their crowns scraping the lining of his stomach.

There was no doubt in his mind that the newborn desert was the child of a very ephemeral nocturnal war. He had expected it, as everyone had anticipated it for four decades; so he wanted to regard the desert with calm. He wondered how many bombs it had taken to create such a desert and knew that the rest of the earth was a sad wasteland of sand too. After all, Italy would not have been the sole center of attention for a war.

The reason for the survival of the villa, the umbrella pines, the flower garden, Antonio himself and his wife was clear in his mind, though the Black King kicked the Red King in the mouth and blood ran down his pontifical beard.

Alba had wakened him at seven that morning, saying, "A lot of cones have fallen recently. I want to pick them up for the pignon nuts. I will be back by the time you wipe the sleep from your face, and we will have piuma bread and strawberry preserves for breakfast."

Antonio had gotten up, washed his face, and resumed his practice exercises with the cards. Professor Deoni would be visiting in three days, and Antonio wanted to conduct a little introspection of his clairvoyant ability for better an-

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swers to new questions from the professor.

Professor Deoni was considerate. He was patient, did not push Antonio Petrarcha, as the two professors from the University of Rome had done three months before. And Professor Deoni was good to Alba. He brought Perugian chocolate one time, and Alemagna cake twice.

Professor Deoni wanted Antonio to leave the villa in Perugia and travel to Denmark, to be studied there.

"What will they want to do?" Antonio had asked quietly, not wishing to offend the professor.

"Dr. Stinsk will speak to you about cards and the future, just as I've been doing. But he will be able to test your power, your gift better than I have. They have equipment up there that makes things more definite."

Antonio was curious, but he didn't want to leave Villa Pinetti. For five years Alba and Antonio had refrained from having children, affording only a small apartment near Viareggio on the Ligurian Sea, when actually they loved the green central country. With the inheritance from Alba's father, who had been a fine marble man at Bocca di Magra, near Michelangelo's Carrara, they could now afford a villa like Villa Pinetti in Perugia. There was a good market for Antonio's cabinet-making in the nearby town of Somina, and the flowers Alba liked grew well in the humus of the villa's ground.

"If you go with me to see Dr. Stinsk," Professor Deoni had explained, "he will recompense for the time and energy you expend."

Alba had said she would go if they wouldn't stay longer than four weeks. Antonio thought the time limit a good idea, and planned to inform Deoni of their decision the next time the professor visited.

The cards had gone well that morning. With his eyes closed, the Queen of Clubs had spoken some soft feminine words embroidered with a club image to let him know which Queen she was. And the Three of Hearts had throbbed like blood to his mind to help him decide it was the Three of Hearts, not Diamonds.

He went through the whole deck four times with one error. A King laughed, and he thought it was a Joker.

The night of the desert's arrival, Antonio had dreamed two quiet nightmares, not unusual; so when he awoke he didn't give them a thought. The desert was a complete surprise. Except, now that he thought about it, maybe he had dreamed about Black Kings struggling with Red Kings.

Looking at the desert made him feel alone. The Black King in his stomach was holding pale fingers

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around the throat of the red monarch.

He returned to the bedroom where Alba was lying on her back. Her hair was up, tightly in a bun and shining because she was only twenty-seven. He took her rough hands and pressed his lips against her cheek until she rose up and embraced him with endearing mumblings.

The Black King kicked the Red King in the mouth again.

Antonio arose, drew all the blinds in the house, and fixed his wife a piece of bread with unsalted butter and crimson preserves. She chewed it with difficulty, gulping it down. Not wanting her to realize their aloneness, he began talking:

"There has been a war, and the countryside here has been dried out. You know why our little villa was not burned? The cards! Remember what the professor said? He said my mind has energy. I can see the cards through their backs, because of the power between my ears. The same as my knowing when Guidi was sick with tuberculosis and nobody knew it last year. You remember with the children from town, when they were lost, and I knew they were in the shed behind the church?"

Alba licked a speck of strawberry jam from the corner of her mouth.

He held her face against his chest and said, "I love our Villa Pinetti and your flowers and the pines. So my energy went against the bomb fire, and I won for us. So we'll live here and the flowers will grow if you tend them. There's water from the well and vegetables we can grow from your seeds. But I'll have to keep an eye on things, or my energy might not be enough." His mind fainted for a moment and sank into his stomach. With a sudden crawling feeling in his bones, he saw the Black King leaping up and down on King Garibaldi's face.

As he spoke the last sentence to Alba, he regretted having voiced his pessimism. When he said it, it seemed to grow stronger, and the Black King looked like a brawny ogre beating a small boy wearing red shorts.

He took her hand, pulling it gently. She rose limply, and he said, "We'll still go get the cone nuts. More cones than you think probably fell during the night because of the war."

Alba was bending over near the garden wall, filling the basket with pine cones, when Antonio noticed the pine trunk nearest the desert sands. The wind and sand were whirling against the tree, and the trunk was blackening. At a distance he could see the grass and moss at the tree's base turn brown and blow away.

The Black King sank wolf-like fangs into the neck of the Red King.

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Antonio squatted by the desert edge, eyeing the border of the grass. Tuft by tuft, blade by blade, the green moss and grass were being swallowed by the desert as it inched its way toward the villa.

Each disappearing blade was a stumbling of the Red King.

Antonio thought he could even smell the sweat on his palms.

He ran to Alba and picked up her basket. "Let's go inside."

"Why? A hundred cones remain."

"I think we have enough. I want to see how many are good and dry."

Alba set the cones on the kitchen table to dry out further. Some of the pignon nuts fell out easily, but others were still green and tightly enclosed under the scores of knobby wings on the cones.

"Can we have veal today?" Antonio asked absent-mindedly, just to break the silence as he stared at the desert through the kitchen window and listened to the Red King's whimper.

"I'll have to get some from Gianni," she answered, then remembered, but with no facial register that Antonio could see. She suggested, "Would you like carne in scatola instead?" proceeding to the cupboard Antonio had made for her birthday and reaching for a can of corned beef before he could nod his answer.

Three pines were burning in a brown smoke, and the desert wind carried the ash away as soon as it formed. Antonio wondered: Everything was fine, it seems, until I started doubting my power. I said, "My energy might not be enough," and the Red King fell back and his face was smashed by the mossy black feet of the Black King. Now that I've doubted once, I can't help but doubt again and again, and the desert will continue to advance more and more. It's like someone telling me, "Don't think about the word 'tree'." It's impossible not to, not to doubt again. Each disappearing blade of green is proof that I should doubt further. The child in the red shorts takes the first step back from the black ogre, and that step gives him the momentum that tells him to run.

Picking up the cards from the table, he fondled them and tried to displace the doubt from his mind and the screaming in his stomach with the simple, quiet images of the cards.

I should not sleep, he thought to himself. The desert would catch me asleep and rush in like a wolf waiting for night. If I sleep, it's all gone. The black night, the Black Knight, the Black King will smother the Red King with sand if I sleep.

The backside of the card warbled softly in a word-color soup, "I am the King of Hearts, the Heart of the Kings." He turned the card over to find a mute King of Hearts facing him with immobile features. Immobile, but still they could speak

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to him. He closed his eyes, and the second card appeared in his mind as a large black shovel with a small letter "a" engraved on its handle.

Alba served him tortorelle soup for supper, and went to the kitchen to eye the cones again. Antonio called to her, "Let's go to bed. More pignons will be ready to fall out tomorrow."

Under the sheets, Antonio lay unmoving, eyes open, waiting for Alba's purr-like snoring to begin. He envisioned the inky desert outside chewing on the pines and inhaling more dying grass.

The kings in his stomach were not sleeping either. The night world was the right world for the Black King, and he was getting the better again.

When Alba was asleep, Antonio eased from the bed, pulled a dining room chair over to the living room window, and fixed his eyes on the pitch-black garden.

Black night would fight his eyes, and his eyes would grow bad, but they wouldn't stop staring into its slime.

When the day broke, the pines were all gone, and the ocher sand was shifting rhythmically by the old rock wall around the garden. It was sad to look at; it would make Alba cry if she were allowed to see it.

The bedroom door creaked, and Alba walked toward him sleepily, her face impressed with sheet lines and bedspread weave.

He herded her back into the bedroom, explaining, "You should stay in bed today, so that I can use my energy to keep things straight. It hurts my head to keep things straight when we're both moving around so much. But I love you."

Alba apologized and returned to bed, using her immense smile to show him her enthusiasm in his command of the situation.

He allowed her to prepare lunch later, but before he let her into the kitchen, he fixed pillow cases over the windows, under the blinds. He wanted to stop and smell the winds of the lunch odor, but he went back to the dining room table. The kings in his stomach were doing well without food as well as sleep. He wanted to flood them with calm smells of good food.

Cards turned out to be no help in cleansing his mind of shadows. The Red King resembled a rag doll shredded and painted with red blobs.

Switching to his elementary school book called *Grandfather and Grandson,* which had been saved for their child, he tried foretelling the words and pictures on the pages, and that preoccupied him until supper, which was tortorelle again.

He went to Alba early that night, and she whispered to him for awhile. He knew she was frustrated; so he stayed in bed with her for an hour and felt her immense smile under his lips. When she finally fell asleep from exhaustion,

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confident that things were fine, Antonio regretted having used up so much energy and resolved that both of them should be quiet the next night.

The kings never tired, and he wanted to give them each a wonderful girl to tire them with love-making.

The living room window, plus the night combined with his fatigued imagination, gave him pictures of the desert sand leaping frog-like into the snapdragons and daisies, devouring their stems and petals on its way toward the villa. Antonio stared into the dark, rubbing his stinging eyes and blinking, sagging eyelids, each of which felt like his tool sack for cabinet making.

He thought he could feel the Black-Night King screaming louder and pounding a softer Red King's face, but he couldn't be sure, though he was afraid the feeling was correct. And he knew that that fear was another step backward.

At the first daylight, the garden appeared shadowless. The sands pawed at the walls of the house, its border below and out of Antonio's vision.

Alba was restless from lying in bed a second day, and he joined her early in the evening. When she fell asleep an hour later, Antonio again resolved that the next night things would be different. He felt the Red King take another step backward when he realized he had failed with his resolution of the night before.

The third night, Antonio's eyes sagged heavily as if weighted with four hammers in each lid, and he drank four cups of espresso with lots of sugar. It tasted like sweet mud; his bloated stomach growled, but it didn't seem to cloud the kings' vision. They continued to pummel and grapple, the Black King on top, giving Antonio sudden gas pains. The pulverized coffee beans in the end gave him back a little of his concentration and control of his eyelids.

If he slept, he continued to tell himself, the desert would rush in. Like slime-fanged wolves of the ink.

The only thing he could do was prepare for the coming morning. While Alba slept, he moved all the canned food and water in pans that he could into the bedroom. Closing the bedroom door behind him, he sat on the floor by the bed and stared at the crack at the bottom of the door.

As soon as daylight shone through the covered bedroom window and under the door, grains of sand also appeared creaping like pale ants under the door.

He opened it a slit, and glanced out at the desert sand and hot wind mixing right outside the room. A bit of rug, attached to the door-frame with two heavy tacks, was the only remnant of the hallway.

He shut the door, and lay down

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beside Alba, pressing himself against her when she awoke, though he feared she would feel the kicking of the kings in his stomach. He explained, "I thought we could eat our meals in here today. It's a hot day today and it's cooler in here. My energy fights the heat with difficulty."

She was silent, but ate a piece of stale piuma bread that no longer deserved the description of "feathery," smearing it with butter to ease the swallowing.

Antonio watched her nose twitch as she searched for the dying smell of the bread, and he knew that the Black King would be affected as much by his tears as it had been by his love-making.

He read to her from *Grandfather and Grandson* and repeated for her the old story about his grandmother's scramble to catch ten pure white doves that escaped from their cage when he was five. They both laughed, and Alba took two naps and snacked on a bruised pear.

Antonio sighed in thanks that kings weren't frolicking in their fatal form in Alba's stomach, too.

When night fell, Antonio began to shake from the ripping in his stomach, his eyelids continuing to snap shut like strong rubber-bands until he drank three cups of cold coffee. There was no surprise that the coolness of the drink didn't manage to cool the kings' frenzy. His mind's eye was plastered with the visions of what morning would bring. He waited an hour after Alba had begun her cat-like snore, then lifted the food from the floor to his side of the bed. Picking up *Grandfather and Grandson* from the dresser, he cleared away a space on his side of the bed, and lay down gently to stare at the first page in the darkness.

Daylight fell directly on the page, and he began to shake again. The Black King had grown taller, and his crown was tearing at the base of Antonio's throat as it danced madly on the Red King's bloody baby-like chest.

The dawn, when he dared look, showed the sand against his feet, and arms of sand into most of the canned foods.

When he turned to Alba, he clenched a fist and bit into his index finger to silence a scream. Blood ran down his chin and all over the pen drawing of Grandfather holding Grandson's baby pink hand. The red of his blood was no consolation.

Alba's leg was gone up to the knee, along with the sheet. There was no blood, just a brown stump against the sand. At first he thought she had slept through the amputation, but when he got up on one elbow, he saw that the sand had crawled into her ivory breast and that there was no longer any rise and fall to it.

He wrapped his bleeding finger in a pillowcase and watched the

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blood spread and shine through crimson. He turned to the second page of *Grandfather and Grandson,* and read aloud to himself all day. His stomach stirred and made noises, but he left the canned foods untouched since the commotion was only the galloping of the Black Knight-King on the red pit of his stomach which looked barely like Garibaldi's face.

The sun set somewhere behind the thick mist and whirlwinds over the desert, and all the pages of the book left their binding and began floating around in his head.

He repeated aloud to himself for the hundredth time that he never should have doubted his power—there had been no reason to. His initial doubt had been the crack in the dam.

He squeezed his finger and felt the crust of coagulated blood over its puffiness. He looked to the west, away from Alba's side of the mattress, and pushed the book from him, into the sand. His head felt like wet cotton. His stomach like a winery where a Dark Giant stomped an infernal wine from a dying red-grape face.

The evening sand was warm against his back as he slipped off the mattress and lay down to close his eyes, thinking that perhaps he should have gone to sleep a long time ago. He decided that he would have no nightmares—that was in his power—just a pleasant dream, before the desert finally rushed in. Let the Black King have his tummy and body, but let Perugia have his mind.

Antonio relaxed, went limp, and began to dream confidently and naively about Villa Pinetti and a great green Perugian countryside that unrolled gradually upon the earth, stretching from horizon to horizon until it was done. No Black Knight challenged anyone in the idyllic scene.

The Black King of his subconscious gradually turned green. Not moss green, but Perugian green. The Black King became a dream of a succulent green umbrella pine.

Under his body, the desert gathered its forces, but paused at the top of its wave.

Antonio's leg jerked once during the dream of running on a Perugian hill. Then, in the horizon far from his prostrate form, grains of sand began to part. The first umbrella pine shoot made its way toward the clouds. By morning, Antonio was wakened by a cat-like snoring, echoing off the walls of a bedroom. His mind's eye held the card image of a dancing, freckle-faced Joker, and his stomach was calm, as it asked him the question, "Was the Black Knight really such a bad fellow."

Antonio turned to Alba enthusiastically and faced the thought of exhaustion with an immense smile that she soon matched. ◀

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*Larry Brody received a BA from Northwestern University in 1966 (and while there, won every literary prize the university offered). He is presently studying for a PhD at the University of Iowa and says that he hopes to teach "at a small college where the minds are open, where the sun always shines—and there's enough time to write." We hope he finds it, for his first story for us—about a recalcitrant demon who literally brings the house down with his musical talent—is a very enjoyable yarn indeed.*

# DEMON

## *by Larry Brody*

*Pinchok frowned and squatted on the edge of the roof, looking down at the city which seemed to revolve below. The view from the slowly spinning restaurant atop the city's tallest building was supposed to be superb, and perhaps it was, but Pinchok was in no mood to appreciate beauty.*

*He was angry.*

*And he was lonely.*

*It was night, and the smell of gasoline and smoke seemed somehow to mingle with the sound of engines and impatient horns and drift up to him. The throbbing rhythm of the traffic combined with the garish lights on the surrounding buildings, producing the impression of grotesque unreality.*

*Pinchok had never before encountered anything like it, and he thought sadly of home, the home he might never see again. He looked down at the alien world and drew himself up to his full height.*

Pinchok stared across the room, looking directly into the eyes of the demon. The creature's pasty white face made him shudder. Who would have thought anything living could be so ugly?

"You want to give me that again, Jack?" Pinchok asked calm-



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ly. He ruffled the fur on the palms of his hands, then smoothed it again.

The demon looked puzzled. "I said I'd like the usual three wishes," it said. "I'm willing to pay the standard price." The hideous little being lowered its eyes, gazed down at the floor.

"You're just not coming through at all, baby," Pinchok told it. Once again he reached out mentally and probed the invisible barrier which confined him, and once again his mind felt itself blocked, trapped. It was hopeless. The pentacle which held him had no weak spots, and he would have to play along with his captor. But how could he when he had no idea what it was talking about?

"Well?" the demon demanded. "I don't see how I can make it any clearer. You'd think you'd never done this sort of thing before."

"Oh yeah, I get kidnapped all the time."

"Kidnapped? Now look, if you think you're going to get out of—"

"Baby," Pinchok said, "baby, I'm a couple hundred years old and no kid, but this whole routine is new to me, see? I mean, I'm sitting at home cleaning up my instruments and getting ready for what could be the biggest break in my career, just sitting in my own little home, and all of a sudden there's this very theatrical thunderclap, and poof! I'm trapped here by some obnoxious spell I could counter in a minute—if I knew what its ingredients were.

"And there you are," Pinchok continued, "with those beady little eyes, looking scared to death of me—you'd think something like you would welcome a bit of beauty into its life—so there you are, talking about wishes and souls and 'unholy pacts,' mumbling about some character named Faust—listen, all I want is out, that's all. So just say whatever it is you've got to say, and I'll go home. And then you can trap some other guy and play little games with *him*. Okay?"

The demon shook its scrawny head. "I don't—no, not okay. Sure, I'm a little scared, but when I summon a devil, I expect it to behave properly, like in the legends, and not give me any ridiculous story about—"

"When you summon a *what?*"

"A devil, a spirit, a demon—"

"Baby, baby, here I've been handling myself so well, and now you're going to make me blow everything. *You're* calling *me* a demon?"

"Well, that's what you are. . . ." It took a step backward, leaned against the faded wall, face showing total bewilderment. "Aren't you?"

"Ah, you catch on fast. Look, I don't want to hurt your feelings or anything, but it seems to me you've got things twisted around. Just what were you trying to do?"

"Twisted around? What's your

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name?" the demon said suddenly.

"This is hardly the time for introductions."

"What's your name?"

Pinchok sighed and told him. "With a K at the end."

"Not Beelzebub or Mephistopheles? Or Lucifer?"

He snorted. "Sure, I'd go real far with a name like that. Can't you just see it—Mephistopheles and his Multi-Talented Fingers? Great."

Pinchok shook his head, but the demon wasn't watching. It had picked up a thick old volume and was rapidly thumbing through it. "No name like that," it said at last. It examined Pinchok thoughtfully. "But if you aren't a demon, just what are you?"

Pinchok looked up at the gods disgustedly. "Just a hard-working lorris player, Jack, that's all. Now let me go, will you? I'm nothing but a working man."

The demon began to smile. "And I suppose you think I'm a demon?"

Pinchok nodded, and the demon laughed, wailing hysterically. The sound grated through Pinchok, rushed at his ears like the screeching of an untuned voalo. He folded the pointy flaps over his soundtubes and blocked out the noise until finally the creature's sounds stopped.

"This is really funny," it said.

"I want to go home," said Pinchok.

"We each thought the other—" It began laughing again.

"You going to explain?"

"It's simple," the demon said. "I found an extremely rare book and thought I'd use its spells to make a deal with a devil. Things weren't going very well, you see. But now it seems there aren't any devils, because all I got was you from someplace—maybe another dimension or something—but you looked like what I wanted, so I—"

"Wonderful. I'm insulted, and you're a *he* instead of an *it*. Glad to hear it. So now that you've got it all figured out, why don't you just send me back where I came from?"

The other nodded. "The words are right here." Then he stared at Pinchok. "Wait. The demon stories had to originate somehow. Sure, I'll bet others from wherever you're from have been brought here before. Sure." He smiled. "Even if you aren't a devil, you're just as good as one. You've got to have some powers which can help me. And I won't even have to worry about losing my soul."

"Say the words," Pinchok said, pushing ineffectively at the barrier and beginning to understand what his captor meant. "Say the words."

"After you do what I want."

"I can't help you. What's a poor musician know?"

"Magic's very rare here," the demon said, ignoring him, "and only I can get you back. I'm going to

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memorize the formula and destroy the book, then let you completely into this world. A little wealth, a little fame, then—"

"Look, Jack, I've got to get home. I've got *obligations*. Maybe some other—"

"My name is Sarley, Ted Sarley," the demon said. "And from now on you'll call me 'Master.' "

And Pinchok watched helplessly as the book of spells burned to ash.

"Stop playing with that light!"

Pinchok ignored the command. He sat on Sarley's kitchen table, having found all the chairs in the apartment too small, and continued flicking the switch, marveling that whenever the tiny letters read ON, the small globes on the ceiling glowed with an unflickering brightness. Back home the only artificial light came from candles specially blessed by a warlock so they wouldn't burn down.

"A fine help you are," Sarley said, slouching into a chair and glaring at his prisoner. "A fine help. I've got to hide you because you're the biggest, ugliest thing I've ever seen, and I've got to feed you more than any five people—and what do you do all day? You walk around admiring the 'wonders' of modern science. Ridiculous!"

"Yeah," Pinchok said, "my mother always told me I was good for nothing. Besides, Jack, this science stuff is really a kick. All we've got at home is magic. Can't do half the things you can."

"So I'm finding out. Don't you know any spells at all that could get me something I want? Anything?"

"Look, baby, could you rig up one of these electric lights if someone just walked up and asked you? You'd need equipment, a diagram. Well, it's the same with me. You guessed right—where I come from things work through sorcery, but not everyone's a sorcerer, just as here not everyone's a scientist. See?

"I can do a few things," Pinchok continued, "enough so I can get along in everyday life, but that's all. I'm a musician, and everyone knows we don't know anything. We just stand around with our eyes half closed and talk hip and find the cute birds and all. Now, you got yourself the wrong guy, Jack, so why not just send me home? Forget this whole business."

Sarley shook his head. "No. There must be something you can do for me."

"I can blow the greatest lorris you've ever heard, but that's it. Look, I'm not holding out. I've been in this dump for two days, and all we've learned is that I'm better looking than you—no matter what you think—I'm about two feet taller, and I could snap you in two if I wanted.

"I've shown you every spell I

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know, cooking, cleaning, a little mind reading if the wind is right, but that's it. Use what I taught you and become a vacuum cleaner or something. So my senses are a little sharper, and I can teleport, but —"

"Teleport!" Sarley jumped from his chair, knocking it to the floor. He grabbed at Pinchok, who pushed him away easily and smoothed his fur. "You never mentioned teleportation," Sarley said.

"Never thought it meant much. I mean, everyone can do it. How else you going to travel?"

"How else? By foot, by car, by bus. No one here can—you mean you just think yourself someplace and you're there—instantaneously?"

"Sure," Pinchok said. "What's a car, hey?"

Sarley didn't answer. He walked into the small living room, and Pinchok felt snatches of the other man's thoughts enter his own brain. *Anyplace,* Sarley was saying to himself, *anyplace at all . . . just pop in . . . take what's wanted . . . no locks. . . .*

Pinchok stopped listening, took a can of beer from the battered refrigerator and poked two holes into the soft metal top, using his forefinger. He took a long sip of the only drink he'd found here with any kind of taste. So Sarley wanted to be rich. But why should Pinchok have to wear his horns down to their nubs for him?

To get home, that was why. The reason was enough. It had to be.

"Come here," Sarley shouted, and Pinchok wondered if it would be worth being stranded here just to watch the little man turn blue when a curse hit him. "Listen," Pinchok said, knowing what the question was going to be, "I can't teach you to teleport. It's an ability not a skill."

"But if I can't go, you still can," Sarley said. "So that's no big problem. How are you kept out of some place you're not allowed in your world? You know, like a woman's bedroom—or a bank?"

"What's a bank? And no woman's ever—"

"You know what I mean."

"Garlic. You hang garlic all over and no one can teleport in."

Sarley nodded. "It figures. Might be a basis for another old legend of ours. Well, we'll keep away from delicatessens. Have you ever stolen anything?"

Pinchok knew what was coming. "No," he said. "No, I haven't."

"Ah," said his captor, "tomorrow your answer will be different."

"Kicks," Pinchok said.

But he didn't mean it.

Pinchok tightened the last wooden peg, then stepped back to admire his handiwork. The finished lorris lay on the kitchen table, its thick black leather straps and huge red silk sacs shining in the electric light.

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"Hmph, looks just like a giant bagpipe," Sarley said.

Pinchok shrugged. Since the bank vault fiasco last week, relations between the two had been strained. It hadn't been Pinchok's fault things hadn't worked out—he'd do anything to get home—but Sarley refused to forgive him.

He also refused to return Pinchok to his own dimension.

The "Master" had thought he'd planned the robbery perfectly. At midnight, when the building would be empty, Pinchok was to have materialized inside the vault, ripped open the smaller safes kept within the large one, and helped himself, making as many trips back to the apartment as were necessary to get everything.

It hadn't worked. Pinchok had learned the bank's location, visualized its interior as Sarley'd described it, and concentrated. But as the vault began to form around him, Pinchok suddenly felt a sharp pain throughout his entire body, the type of pain normally caused by a garlic shield. He'd concentrated harder, but the pain had increased, and he'd snapped back into Sarley's living room. Another effort of will had produced still more pain, and he'd had to give up.

Sarley interrupted Pinchok's thoughts. "What are you going to do with that thing?" he demanded, pointing at the lorris.

"Practice, what else? Got to keep the fingers in shape."

"For what?" Sarley began to swear. "I lost my job by staying home and watching you, and we can't keep going on like this, with you teleporting into food stores and taking just enough for us to eat. We've got to get where the big money is."

"Can't do it, Jack. Now if I was home—"

"Forget it. Hell, it's ridiculous." Sarley looked as if he were going to cry. "Banks, jewelry stores, they're out. Who'd think something as big and ugly as you could be stopped by silver, like some werewolf being stopped by silver bullets? I got myself a fine old devil here, yes sir.

"The minute there's any kind of large silver concentration in an area, like silver coins or rings, he can't go in there. Hurts the poor thing too much. Look at you. Nothing should hurt something as big as that." Sarley pounded on the table, coming dangerously close to the lorris.

"You know what, ducks?" Pinchok said. "If you don't shut up and send the kid here back home, I may just play my part and tear you into little pieces. Can I help it if I'm allergic? We don't have mined metals where I come from. Just because our languages are almost the same doesn't mean everything else is."

Sarley stopped pounding and backed away, and Pinchok smiled to himself and picked up the lor-

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ris, strapped it to his shaggy chest. It felt comfortable against his body, and he realized how much he'd missed it.

Putting the nozzle into his mouth, he played the scale, testing the sound sacs. They were perfectly in tune. Closing his eyes, he breathed deeply and began to play out his thoughts, to give musical expression to his situation. He pitted emotion against emotion in a two-line counterpoint, weaving the sounds around each other and finally clashing them together.

"Are you playing?" Sarley said. "I don't hear anything."

But Pinchok could, and he blew, increasing the tempo until it matched his quickened pulse, then doubling it and sailing away as the world seemed to shudder with the beat.

He might have played all day if Sarley hadn't called out and, lunging at him, ripped the nozzle from his mouth. "Look at that! Look!" the little man shouted, his eyes wide.

Pinchok gazed at the kitchen table.

Or what was left of it.

The iron legs had disappeared, and half the formica top lay on the buckling, swaying floor. Lay steaming.

Pinchok looked quickly about the room. The chair legs were gone, as was the lighting fixture which had hung over the now burnerless stove. The metal handles on the cabinets had also disappeared, and where the refrigerator had been there was only a mass of jelly-like material.

"It all dissolved," Sarley said. "You played, and everything in the room that you don't have in your dimension or that had been altered from its natural state just dissolved. . . ."

Pinchok didn't say anything. He knew what the man was thinking.

Sarley scratched his head. "Why, we could—" he paused. "Come on into the living room," he told Pinchok. "I think I've got a plan. . . ."

And as Pinchok followed, it seemed to him that this movement, this whole symphony, had been played before.

It was nearly midnight, and the bank was deserted. Pinchok moved about freely. He couldn't be seen so long as he kept away from the huge shatterproof window which formed one long wall, and he walked through the tellers' area, examining anything that looked interesting, anything that seemed to have been hand-fashioned and not manufactured.

He joined Sarley, who stood before the vault fidgeting nervously and obviously wishing he hadn't come. Pinchok laughed, remembering how the little man had twitched when he had picked him up and teleported the two of them into the building.

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"An alarm will sound if the vault is opened," Sarley said, "so you'll have to be careful. Try to localize your—" he stopped, then continued, "—your *music,* so only this center part dissolves and I can crawl in. Think you can do it?"

Pinchok nodded. "I've practiced." All he wanted was to get this over with. Oddly, it wasn't the crime that bothered him so much but the perversion of his music. He wished he could just break in with his bare hands. But if he did he'd be in contact with all the silver once again.

Sarley walked off and stood twenty feet away to keep watch. And probably, Pinchok thought, to protect himself.

They'd learned that when certain notes were hit most clothing fasteners dissolved too.

Apologizing to his lorris and his profession, Pinchok began to play very quietly, squeezing gently as he went up and down the scale. A wisp of smoke came from the steel door before him, and as he watched the wall began to smoulder.

It rippled as the steel softened, became almost liquid, began disappearing. A small hole appeared in the center of the door, and Pinchok backed away, playing louder. The hole enlarged until it was about the size of his fist. His body began to tingle uncomfortably, and he stepped further back, still playing.

A learner's waltz.

"Hey!"

Pinchok turned sharply at the sound of Sarley's voice. The little man stared out a small window overlooking the bank's parking lot, and his mind radiated fear. Pinchok heard the thoughts, uncertain as to their meaning: *Agency detective . . . must make . . . rounds . . . come here every so often . . . damn name right on car door . . . have to come in over there. . . .*

Then another set of thoughts came in, a fainter set which became clearer with each successive word-picture: *Waste of time . . . place's always clean . . . no one robs banks . . . if I didn't have to punch in. . . .*

Two images suddenly filled Pinchock's brain, Sarley's picture of a short fat man wearing an ill-fitting beige uniform, and the uniformed man's own picture of Sarley, thin, pale, frightened.

"Can't be caught now!" Sarley shouted, and his mind said: *the gun . . . fire the gun. . . .*

And from the detective a puzzled: *Who's in there? . . . no one should. . . .* Then: *He's armed . . . got to take out the gun . . . snap's . . . how? . . . .*

Pinchok forgot about the vault, about the lorris strapped to his chest, about going home as the bank's side door swung open and the two frightened men confronted each other, their tangled thoughts suddenly telling him

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what a gun was used for. He sprang at Sarley, who stood with his finger closing on the trigger.

Sarley heard the sound and whirled around. "No!" he cried.

Pinchok slammed into him before the gun went off, knocking it from the little man's hand and throwing him violently to the floor. The detective's revolver fired as Pinchok rose, and Pinchok winced in pain as the bullet creased his side.

"A devil," the detective whispered, "a devil," but before he could fire again Pinchok tore the gun from his grasp and threw it across the room. Then he slung the unconscious Sarley over his shoulder and teleported back to the apartment.

He wondered how the detective would explain.

*And now Sarley's dead, Pinchok thought as he sat on the roof, because he hit his head a little too hard when I tackled him, because the people here are as frail as they are ugly.*

*How am I going to get home?*

*Tomorrow he'd start searching the bookstores. He smiled grimly, baring his fangs. Give them something to talk about.*

*But tonight he had to play.*

*Pinchok stood up, his lips on the lorris's nozzle. He counted out the time, pressed the air sacs.*

*He shut his eyes and played out his soul.*

*He had melted every automobile for three blocks and the building on which he stood was starting to sink before he realized what he was doing.*

*He didn't stop.*

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*William had no idea where he was, or why, or what had happened. He knew only that he had somehow been placed in a position where he was being kept as a slave, and that his mistress punished rebellion by death.*

# THE SUPERIOR SEX

## by Miriam Allen deFord

SHE STOOD PROUD AND TALL like a Viking woman. She would have made a wonderful model for an ancient sailing ship's figurehead, fair hair blowing in the wind and blue eyes fixed on far horizons.

She glared at him and said: "How dare you come into my presence unsummoned? Go back at once to the seed-bearers' quarters where you belong!"

His bravely planned speech forsaking him, he slunk back and scuttled off, knowing all too well what would happen to him if he disobeyed, remembering only too well what Harry's corpse had looked like. He was still, a week later, more or less in a state of shock. It was hardly sensible to have made this foray, evading the guards, into Her Highness's private suite. He was not prepared to defy her.

In the harem they laughed when he reappeared. They all spoke English, though with a strange accent, and interspersed with words which were either neologisms or from some unknown tongue.

If he could only make out *where* he was, and why, and just what had happened!

"Here comes the brave rebel," jeered Thom. And Bawb added, "I thought the handy-robots would be called for a burial detail."

Danl, the Chief Husband, hushed them with a frown.

"It's not funny," he snapped. "What kind of crazy upbringing did you have, Willem?" His name was William, but that was how they pronounced it. "It's a disgrace to our men's quarters to have such an unmasculine creature in it!"

It was all like a reversed carica-



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ture of the relation of the sexes a hundred years ago, William reflected. Only it was worse, for apparently wherever he had landed there was a large superfluity of males over females. The result was polyandry, as in the opposite case it would have been polygyny. And these kept males were as smug and complacent, as self-degrading and superficial, as kept females had ever been. They might have greater physical strength than the females, but they would never have dreamed of using it.

One of them echoed his thought. "It isn't *nice* for a man to try to set himself up as a woman's equal, which nature never intended him to be," he pronounced. "No lady can be expected to be chivalrous to an unmanly man."

Chivalrous—a polite word for the jocular condescension with which Her Highness had first accosted them, before poor Harry had brought her wrath down upon them by his open truculence.

They had been delivered into her presence bound and gagged, after their rough capture, and as soon as his gag was off, Harry had defied her. The only reason William had not joined him and met the same fate was that he was still too dazed and bewildered. His mind was whirling with unanswered questions: Where and when had the crash landed them? On another planet? In an alternate universe? In the future?

He couldn't take any more from his harem mates. He stalked into his sleeping alcove—it had no door but it was at least curtained—and sat down, brooding. It was growing dark; soon, after dinner, the command might come for one of them. Not for him—not at all so far, and certainly not after today. He had come to the conclusion that she was keeping him merely as a status symbol—a curiosity. Nobody else had a husband like him!

"Which of you fathers her children?" he had dared to ask in the innocent early days. Danl was shocked. "If Her Highness should wish to mother a child, she has all the sperm banks in the world to select from," he said stiffly. "We are the relaxation from her duties and cares."

There was a slight sound at the curtain. William looked up, and saw the ingenuous face of Chass, the youngest of the husbands.

"May I come in, Willem?" he murmured. Without waiting for a reply he edged past the curtain and settled on a floor-cushion at William's feet. For a moment William felt his blood rising and his fist knotting, but it was nothing like that. Chass wanted to be where a whisper would be audible.

"They're all dressing for dinner," he breathed. "Making up and titivating, each of them hoping he'll be favored tonight." He giggled. "I don't bother—it'll prob-

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ably be me again, if it's anyone, and she doesn't care how I look. I'm new and she's not tired of me yet. I thought you'd take over when you came, and give me a rest, but I understand now why not."

"That's more than I do," William growled.

Ignoring the interruption, Chass went on.

"I've been waiting for a chance to speak to you privately. I can't tell you how thrilled I've been by what you've said that shocks the old boy so. All the things I've hardly dared to think—I was afraid I was the only man who did!"

"Such as what?"

"Oh, I know it hasn't all been explicit, but I can read between the lines. Willem, I want to be your disciple! I feel just as you do—we men *aren't* just seed-bearers and playthings. We have brains too, and if they'd educate us and give us a chance, we could do everything that they can.

"In fact, I think we're *superior* to them—not just more sensitive and high-minded and pure, the way all men claim, but potentially above them mentally, too."

"I never said that. That isn't what I mean at all. Where I come from—well, anyway, what I mean is that *some* of us are better and more able than some of them, and vice versa. In other words, we're all human beings together, with immense variability, and sex isn't the limiting factor."

"I don't dig that," said Chass sulkily. "The way I look at it, people are either slaves or masters. We're slaves, and they're masters—or mistresses. I'm not interested in equality with them; I'm bottom dog and I want to be top dog."

"But—"

"Sh! There's the dinner bell. Can we talk some more some time soon? If we could start a *movement*—if we could find others who think as we do—"

"Beat it, Chass," said William wearily. "I've had enough war in my life. I don't want to get into another one. All I want is out of here."

"Well, if you're going to be like *that*, when I've offered my help," Chass said with spite, "I wash my hands of you!"

"O.K., just as you like. I don't want any dinner, tell Danl."

He watched Chass retreat, anger implicit in his very walk. He needed friends badly, and now he had made another enemy.

At least he was sure that now he would be safe from further intrusion behind his curtain. The men would be on the *qui vive* all evening, though her Highness seldom sent for any of them, despite Chass's adolescent boasting. There was great agitation and tittering and bitchy comment when she did. Apparently, procreation—and she must have provided herself with at least one daughter as heiress—was done by test-tube

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impregnation; and she seemed to have only a moderate interest in or desire for sex.

Obviously she was somebody very important in wherever-he-was —a queen, or a great feudal lady at the very least. Since he had never been allowed to leave the—castle? fortress?—after he and Harry were brought there, blindfolded and fettered, from the wreck, he had no idea of the social set-up among the lower orders. Undoubtedly the excess of males must have made polyandry the rule, but he doubted if ordinary women had anything like Her Highness's harem of two or three husbands.

Deliberately William let his mind wander, on the principle that if you have forgotten something, you will never remember it by straining for it, but if you let it alone, the subconscious may eventually deliver the memory to you.

The crash, though it had not injured him physically, and the rough treatment they had received after their capture, must have induced some sort of selective amnesia in both Harry and himself. Certainly Harry had seemed as bewildered and ignorant as he was. In the brief time before Harry had defied Her Highness and she had ordered him disintegrated, they had been kept apart as much as possible, but there had been occasional moments when they managed to ask each other questions neither of them could answer.

If only he could remember what had happened *before* the ship fell! Harry, he was sure, had been the pilot. He was also sure that they were not old friends, that they had met seldom before they were briefed for this expedition. Briefed by whom? Where? With what objective? All that was completely lost. He knew his name was William, that he spoke English as his native tongue, that he was somewhere in his early thirties. The rest was sunk in the mists of forgetfulness.

No, one other memory clung to him vaguely. In his former life, wasn't he married? And wasn't there something unusual about his wife? He couldn't come any nearer to it than that, but somewhere in his mind something important lurked which, if he could clear it, would help to explain his present predicament.

He had volunteered for something, he thought: but what? And though he was sure he hadn't known Harry well before (before what?), the idea clung to him that he *had* known a lot about him. Somewhere in relation to him was a woman named Janet.

One thing was certain: it was Harry who had played the hero, not he. In consequence, Harry was horribly dead and he was alive—a virtual slave, but a live slave. It was guilt and revulsion that had impelled his rash act today. What he had intended to do when he en-

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tered her presence puzzled him now; what he *had* done was shrink back from her anger, yet he did not believe he was a coward.

Could it be, he wondered, that some substance in their food or drink made of them all the foolish mental and moral weaklings they were? Or was it simply the inevitable effect of slavery on the slave?

His musing was interrupted abruptly. The curtain was jerked aside.

"Her Highness wishes me to conduct you to her—at once," Danl announced. His face showed a mixture of curiosity, resentment, and envy.

"But I don't particularly want to see Her Highness," William responded lightly. "She ordered me away when I called on her this afternoon."

Danl's expression turned to horror.

"But you must—when she—no one ever—" he sputtered.

"Oh well, anything to oblige a lady." He got up lazily and stretched. Underneath, his nerves were tense.

She looked more than ever like the figurehead of a Viking ship. She dismissed Danl with a smile and a pat on the shoulder that left him quivering with happiness, and then she sat down. There was only one chair.

"I have been thinking over your —shall we say your visit to me," she said coolly. "I could have had you executed for invading my privacy, you know. But I realize that you are a stranger unfamiliar with our laws, and besides I can make allowances for the weaker reasoning powers of the male. Your companion showed himself obviously untamable, so I had him destroyed. You seem to me a more teachable type, so up to now I have spared you, and even made you a part of my household. But my mercy is not irrevocable."

"Your Highness," William said politely, "you have me at a disadvantage. You, if you will forgive me for saying so, are as ignorant of the customs of my world as I am of yours. Moreover, I am still not entirely recovered from the shock of a crash landing, followed by my rough capture and then by the horrible death of my pilot, right before my eyes."

"Go on," she said icily. Her finger hovered over a button on the arm of her chair. William fought down a rising panic.

"To be frank, I don't know where I am, or when this is, or what has happened to me. Worse, I have amnesia as to the trip itself; I don't remember where I was going, how I came to be in that space ship at all, or even just who my pilot was—all I know about him is that his name was Harry. I am sure that a great lady like yourself, apparently a queen or near to it, will have consideration for my plight, and help me to orient my-

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self so that we can talk to each other on a plane of approximate equality."

She almost smiled. She looked at him with candid curiosity.

" 'Equality,' " she said, "is a word that can hardly apply except between equals. But I do realize that you are a superior specimen of your sex—or I should not be having this interview with you at all—and if you want to ask me questions, I shall reply to any that I think reasonable."

"What year is this?"

"It is 943 of the 2017th Cycle."

"That doesn't help me, except to show that you keep a different time from mine. What is the name of your sun?"

"The sun, of course."

"Then what planet is this?"

"Argyth, the great moon of Oxod."

He sighed.

"I am afraid I am as confused as ever. Tell me, was ours the first space ship that has come to your world?"

"That is no concern of yours."

"All right—security; I understand that. Well, then, how does it happen that you all speak English—a rather strange and mutilated dialect, but still English?"

"English? What is that? We speak our own tongue."

"But not mine? Then how is it that we can speak and understand each other?"

"Oh, that," she answered carelessly. "Of course we're not speaking—what did you call it, English, or whatever your own language is. You are speaking and understanding ours. While you were unconscious our surgeons planted a translater in your brain. What you call a mutilated dialect is your own uneven auditory response to our speech."

He was silent for a while, digesting this. Then he took a deep breath.

"Would you be willing, Your Highness, to answer any questions about your social structure here?"

"Possibly. It would depend on what they were."

"As I understand it," he said hesitantly, "in this world it is taken for granted that men are mentally inferior to women?"

She looked surprised. "But they *are*," she said.

"Not in my world. There, in the past, just the reverse was thought to be true."

He remembered suddenly a passage from an ancient poet he had read in college: "Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,/Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." He decided it would hardly be diplomatic to quote it.

"Nowadays," he went on, "we are, to some extent at least, on a basis of equality, though there are still some hangovers from the former time. We think of ourselves primarily as human beings, born

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of the same parents and with the same inherent natures."

"That, of course, is pure nonsense," she replied crisply. "The mere fact that there are so many more males than females is proof that the male is in essence only a seed-bearer. It is to flatter your masculine vanity that we call you husbands and pretend that you are completely human beings in the same sense we are."

Just like the bees and ants and termites, he thought.

"In my world," he retorted, "the numbers of each sex are about even; there are disparities one way or the other in some regions, but this is true on the whole. At one time, up to a few centuries ago, the official system—often breached, but still the norm—was monogamous marriage, one wife to one husband. And even today very many people prefer it."

"It sounds horrid," she said. "I have important affairs to attend to, heavy responsibilities. My husbands are for recreation. As one of our poets has put it. 'Men die for love, which to women/Is but rest at the end of the day.'"

Another ancient couplet floated through William's mind: "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;/ 'Tis woman's whole existence." He suppressed Byron as he had suppressed Tennyson.

She frowned. "Well, all this is irrelevant. Have you asked all your questions? Do you understand better now what your situation and your duties are?"

He braced himself.

"I understand," he said deliberately, "but I don't accept it."

Her blue eyes flashed dangerously.

"I don't tolerate rebellious husbands," she said menacingly. "If you are going to turn out as insolent as your fellow was, you will meet the same fate."

Suddenly William lost control.

"Then do it!" he shouted. "I'd rather be dead than live like this!"

Her Highness touched the button. The door opened and two burly robot soldiers entered. Before he could move they had him by both arms. Behind them, a human officer aimed her weapon at his head. That was what he had seen happen to Harry, before the pilot swelled up, turned black, and then exploded in a dreadful mess of blood and tissue.

He shut his eyes. At least he would die like a man—a man as men were understood to be in his own time and place.

"That's enough. We've proved our point," Her Highness said from far off.

But it wasn't Her Highness's voice. It was Janet's.

"He's coming out of it," she said. "Help me with him, Harry."

His eyes opened and he stared groggily at the two bent over him. He was lying on an operating table, and above him loomed the

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anxious faces of his wife and of Professor Ranleigh, whose associate she was in the university's psychology department. Janet's dark eyes were full of concern.

"Lie still, darling," she said, "until we get all the electrodes out."

"How are you feeling, Barton?" asked the professor, whom William had never called Harry; they had met seldom and only formally.

"O.K., I guess. How long was I out?"

"About 15 minutes."

"Gosh, I lived through a week. Was it a success?"

"We can't tell till we've gone over the recording. But it looks like a breakthrough at last. As I explained when you were good enough to volunteer—against your wife's wishes, I can tell you now."

"I was so afraid it might do you some harm," said Janet.

"He knew that, didn't he?" Ranleigh snapped.

"Don't fight over me, you two," William said, amused. He was still somnolent, and still full of relief at his escape from Her Highness. "After all, I may be only a lowly astrophysicist, but I do understand the scientific method!"

"Of course you do," the professor said heartily. "And if this has worked with you, now that we're sure no harm's been done, we'll have no trouble getting a few more volunteers and perfecting the technique. Janet was reluctant to ask you, but as I told her then, we had no choice; the thing has to be kept top secret, and I couldn't think of anyone else we could trust to have even an inkling of it. I'm not married, and neither of us could be the subject, because it needs the two of us to administer it."

"Of course. I understand. Don't fuss, Janet; I'm all right." He grinned. "Don't fuss as a scientist," he added wickedly, "but maybe you'd better worry as my wife! While you two were digging data out of my brain with your electrode tips, I was being the husband of a beautiful blonde!"

Suddenly his amusement faded.

He began remembering other things. *Why* did Janet keep her professional associations so separated from her personal life? *Why* was her co-worker Professor Ranleigh to him and Harry to her? Why *had* she consented, even under protest, to his volunteering for this dangerous experiment? And for what subconscious reason had he himself been so willing to volunteer?

Almost without volition he heard himself saying smoothly:

"And as for you, Harry, if I may be so chummy, I saw you exploded into a viscous, bloody pulp by a disintegrator, at the express command of my beautiful blonde wife —and I didn't turn a hair to protect or defend you.

"What has your investigation of hidden psychological impulses to say to that?" ◄

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*Larry Eisenberg ("The Saga of DMM," Dec. 1967) returns with a story about a scientist who had accomplished little, his Nobel laureate father who had accomplished a great deal, and a bold experiment which proved that over the enormous reach of the universe,* things have to average out.

# THE TIME OF HIS LIFE

*by Larry Eisenberg*

I SAT IN THE TINY CUBICLE THAT served as my office in the laboratory, my knees cramped under the desk. My father's office was huge, thickly carpeted from wall to wall, lined from floor to ceiling with bookcases. But, of course, my father was a Nobel laureate.

I gritted my teeth. Twenty years earlier I had been a graduate student of great promise. I had joined my father's laboratory as a co-investigator with great hopes of making my own contribution to metabolic research. And now, at forty-four, my work was submerged in the greater accomplishments of my father.

What had happened to me? I was losing my sense of concentration, the ability to focus relentlessly on a single problem regardless of time and people. My father had that ability. He had always had it.

I looked at the picture of Alma, my wife, and the three boys, framed in silver on my desk. She was still undeniably a lovely woman. But in real life, her eyes were underlined with crow's feet, and her exquisitely clear skin had begun to muddy. And what of the boys? They were sturdy, noisy, argumentative, offended because I didn't spend more time with them.

There was no need to. My father came every Sunday, devoting himself fully to Alma and the boys. But he had never taken *me* to a ball game, never fished with me, never taken a long hike to a snow-capped mountain. Our relationship was polite but distant. Even when mother died, we grieved



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apart. But he was not gentle in criticizing my behavior. Only a week earlier, he had called me into his office to discuss difficulties with his grant. It was a pretext for something else.

"You don't carry your weight in this laboratory," he said bluntly. "You've lost all sense of purpose, of *honor*."

"I do more than my share," I said hotly.

"Frolicking in the hay with my lab technician?" he gibed.

"That's a damned lie!" I said. I shook my head angrily. Two years back, there had been an abortive affair with a sloe-eyed blonde graduate student. It had been exciting, tempestuous, and had fizzled out a few months later. But Sarah Frey was a totally different kind of a girl. There were bonds between us that grew stronger by the hour, something neither my father nor my wife would ever understand. My father had gotten rid of the blonde graduate student, but so far he hadn't acted against Sarah. I think he knew it would be no use.

"I'm very fond of Sarah," I said. "There's nothing in it beyond that."

My father snorted, and I got up and walked out in a huff. Of course he was right. I was entangled from the first day Sarah Frey walked into the laboratory, six months back, her thick black hair lying in two woven plaits along the stiff white back of her starched smock, the soft mouth set in a curve that easily broke into a warm smile. She was efficient, good with our animals, and very careful about recording data.

One morning, when my father had come in unexpectedly, he found us in a passionate embrace. I would have preferred an explosion, but he remained calm, pretending nothing had happened. He even spoke dispassionately to Sarah about preparing a new diet for our capuchin monkeys.

The recollection was still painful. I shuffled the papers on my desk aimlessly. It took the most enormous effort of concentration, but I tried to pull my thoughts back to my work. And for some moments, I succeeded. Twenty years back, I had begun my long search to determine the influences controlling the biological clock. What was it that sent the body temperature of a warm-blooded animal through the same up and down cycle, day after day? Why did so many metabolic functions depend on the length of day?

My father and I had discussed these questions at great length, and it was agreed that I would explore gravitational effects and he would pursue the electromagnetic influences. Chance had been completely on his side. It was his good fortune to be the first to show that brain potentials were definitely dependent on fluctuations in the Earth's magnetic field.

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Working first with capuchin monkeys, then with humans, he demonstrated that the most significant of the brain biopotentials, the alpha rhythm, varied between eight and sixteen times each second, *just as the fluctuations did in the Earth's magnetic field.* And my father had been called to Sweden to receive the magnificent gold medal and the fat cash award.

I was proud of my father, proud of his trail-breaking accomplishment, and also fiercely envious. I had given up ever understanding why. Maybe it was the unrelenting sense of competition that surrounded everything he did. Even now, he was still striving to be first, engaging me in a competition I didn't want, both in the laboratory, and with my wife and children.

"It takes two to race," I said out loud. "And I'm not going to run."

My telephone rang. It was my father, a lousy fifty feet down the corridor, but too busy to walk over and talk to me directly. It was hard to control the contempt in my voice.

"What is it?" I said.

"I have something of tremendous importance to discuss," he said. "And I've a lot to show you. Could you spare me a few minutes?"

A few minutes? I had great chunks of empty time ahead. "I'm tied up now," I said. "But I'll be over in a half hour."

I leaned over and set the alarm of my electric clock one half hour ahead. My father could tolerate many things, but never tardiness.

I arrived punctually at my father's office and sat down in the very comfortable leather chair just opposite his desk. We looked directly into one another's eyes, and then, troubled, I looked down at the rug. It was uncanny, almost unnerving at times, to see how much alike in appearance my father and I were. Except for the silver hair and the toughened, wrinkled skin of a seventy year old, we could have passed for brothers. My father sat there puffing on his pipe. The rich aroma of his honeyed tobacco began to fill every corner of the room. I had detested that smell, even as a child.

"I have something to show you, John," said my father. He spoke out of the corner of his mouth without removing his pipe. That too, annoyed the hell out of me. "I would very much like to get your opinion on it," he said.

"Since when did my opinion matter here?"

My father glared at me. "To hell with your self-pity," he said. "I want your scientific acumen if you've got any left. I'm thinking about the arrow of time."

The arrow of time? I grinned in spite of myself. My father had always been preoccupied with this question, for as many years as I could recall. It was an obsession.

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"We both know," said my father, going along lines he had taken innumerable times, "that on a microscopic level there is *no preferred* direction for time. The equations of motion don't give a damn whether time moves forward or backward."

"But it does matter on a macroscopic level," I said, pulled into the dialogue in spite of my resentment. "After all, if the direction of time were equally likely in the forward and backward directions, then there would have to be a total symmetry in the form and process of all animals. Of course there is a rough kind of symmetry, but it breaks down when you examine it closely. Obviously, the human heart and aorta are not symmetrical."

"You're absolutely right," said my father, and I got a thrill of pleasure that ran down into my stomach. He puffed even more vigorously on his pipe, and great blue clouds of smoke began to surround his head. It presaged a good deal more talk.

"What it boils down to," said my father, "is that on a small scale, say on the scale of the Earth itself, there may not be a macroscopic symmetry. But over the enormous reach of the universe, things *have to average out.* If men on Earth have a heart and aorta that point one way, then on some other planet, in some remote corner of the universe, other men have hearts and aortas that go the other way."

"That sounds like an extension of the particle-antiparticle reasoning to me," I said.

"Exactly," said my father. "I might even speculate that since we age in a particular direction here on Earth, perhaps other men grow younger with time, elsewhere."

I started to laugh. "And come out of their mothers' wombs, gnarled, bent, wrinkled and toothless?" My father put down his pipe. "You've reduced my remarks to complete absurdity," he said quietly.

I was happy to see my father angry but it also made me uneasy. "I'm sorry," I said. "But your remarks did seem to point in that direction."

My father stood up abruptly, knocking the ashes of his pipe into a huge embossed silver tray that had been given to him by the laboratory staff when he had received his Nobel prize.

"Talk is cheap," he said. "Let's go into the laboratory. You'll see what I mean."

We walked into the outer corridors, which were dimly lit, and on to the capuchin monkey laboratory. In the center of the laboratory, on a large bench, was a single wire cage. Just behind it was a tall rack of electronic equipment with an L-shaped arm swinging out above the cage. Affixed to the arm and directly over the center of the

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cage was an enormous bank of coils.

My father walked up to the cage and peered into it, clucking very softly to the animal within. I came up behind him and looked over his shoulder. There was a very old animal inside the cage, one so wrinkled and gray that I was amazed it still lived.

"Do you recognize it?" said my father.

"Not really."

"It's our *young* Ginger," he said.

At first I thought it was a grotesque joke, but of course I knew my father had no sense of humor. I looked up at the bank of coils above the cage. My father's eyes followed mine.

"That's the magnetic field synthesizer I had built," said my father. "With it, I can place a controlled field into a one-millimeter area at any point within five feet of the synthesizer. I can vary amplitude and frequency over a large range."

"And Ginger?"

"I locked her into an eight cycles per second magnetic field," said my father. "And by God, she began to track *metabolically* with the fluctuations of this artificial field. Gradually, I began to increase the rate of the fluctuations. As you can see, her biological clock speeded up internally, and aging began to take place at a very rapid pace."

"It's incredible," I said. "I wouldn't have believed it possible."

For the moment my jealousy and antagonism fell away, and the magnitude of his achievement caught hold of my imagination. I examined the animal closely. The features were similar to those of Ginger, but I couldn't be sure. Around her ankle was a tiny identification bracelet marked "Ginger". But it might have been transferred from the real Ginger.

"I know what you're thinking," said my father. "But I've never faked data in my life, and you damn well know it." He lifted a thick notebook which was at one side of the cage. "All of my records are in here," he said. "I want you to read them and offer me your comments."

I took the notebook out of his hands. It was truly heavy. For a fleeting moment, I thought of how upset my father would be if I burned the notebook. Then I pushed the idea out of my head.

"One question," I said. "How do you direct this field at the animal? Do you use uniform field strength? Do you have to focus in a particular site of the cortex, or are there several areas involved?"

"There is a single site involved," said my father. "Read the notebook; it's all in there."

For a moment he looked at me, his eyes warm and almost, it seemed, loving.

"You've called me cold and aloof. But what I'm suggesting is

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that *you* now carry out the experiments of *slowing down* the field fluctuation rate."

My eyes filled. It was enormously generous of him, I knew. In effect, we might be able to make time stand still for the individual. It could be the threshold to immortality for the first time in man's history. The concept was breathtaking.

"I'll start reading your notebook at once," I said.

On the way back to my office, I passed Sarah Frey. She reached out and caressed my arm. Oddly enough, I was annoyed. I nodded at her, curtly, and went on without a word, laboring under the weight of the great notebook.

I read through every scrap of the data, my excitement mounting all the way. It was clear that the experiment of slowing down the fields was really going to rock the world of science. And then it hit me, the great shock of realizing that all of this was my father's work, all his accomplishment and none of it mine. He was handing it to me on a silver platter, but I hadn't degenerated to the point where I could accept such a gift.

I marched back to my father's office and put down his notebook. He looked at me, his great black, almost youthful eyes now expressionless.

"It's your work and not mine," I said. "You've done a fantastic job, but I'm not going to climb on to your bandwagon as though it were my own. I've got to make it on my own."

My father sighed. "Either I give you too little or too much. Why can't you climb aboard? There's enough glory and accomplishment here for five men. And there is so much yet to be worked out. Or do you want to burn up all of your creativity inside Sarah Frey?"

I began to shout. "Leave Sarah out of this. What I do with her is my own goddamned affair. And it's a damn sight more loving, more human and meaningful than your preoccupation with gold medals and applause."

"So that's it," said my father.

I stormed out of his office and back to my own. Sitting there I realized the childishness of what I had said and done. My father was right, and I ought to have joined him. But I couldn't. I was like an upended hour glass, losing all of its sand, and no one was able to turn me right side up so I could get a fresh start.

I spent the night with Sarah. I telephoned my wife and told her, as on countless occasions, that I would be working late at the laboratory and sleeping over. And as always, Alma sighed and pretended to believe me.

In the morning I told Sarah that I was going to divorce my wife. She was sitting before the mirror, brushing her hair with long, even

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strokes, unleashing a rich perfume from the blue-black locks, and her hand began to tremble.

But she said nothing. Did she believe me? I swore that I meant it this time, but Sarah was unconvinced. Or was it really the twenty-year difference in our ages? I left her apartment, angry with her, and for days thereafter I ignored her attempts to approach me.

My father was more direct with me. If he met me coming down the corridor, he would turn back. I knew his work went on, perhaps the very same experiments I had refused to do. But I would not humble myself.

One evening, when I had forced myself to stay behind and work on a lackluster paper which I was scheduled to give at a Spring meeting, my father broke into my office with great excitement. His step was springy, and he seemed to be bursting with a vitality that belied his years.

"Come with me," he said.

I followed, great fear building in me. We went back to the capuchin room and the cage of Ginger. My father gestured at the cage, and I looked inside. *She had been restored to her youth.*

"Congratulations," I said, but I was close to complete despair. It might have been my own achievement. And then, all of the unformed feelings that had been sifting in and out of my mind took form.

"I know that as yet you haven't tried this process on a human," I said. "I'm willing to volunteer."

"It's courageous of you," said my father. "But the danger is enormous. It would require extreme care and a protracted exposure to avoid reversing the metabolic processes too abruptly."

"It's not courage," I said. "I want another chance to start afresh. Twenty years would give me that chance. Perhaps then I could avoid the things that led me into a blind alley."

"It's too late," said my father. "You've a wife and three fine boys. You can't turn back."

"I'm determined," I said. "If you won't help me, you know that I will get there by myself."

"I know," he said. "But you're a fool. There's a precedent before you."

He went to the laboratory sink and washed his face vigorously with soap and water. The dried, leathery skin seemed to vanish like smoke, and a clear, ruddy skin emerged.

"All makeup," said my father. He reached up and removed the silver hair, and a full head of chestnut-colored hair, the counterpart of my own, emerged. "As you see," he said, "I've already carried out the experiment."

I looked at him. He was almost my mirror image.

"You're a swine," I said. "A lecherous beast. You took my work,

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my ambition, my wife and children. Now you've taken my body."

"It's not like that at all," he muttered. "You know it was logically the next step in my research."

"Was it?" I said. "Are you logically headed next for Alma's bed?"

He flushed to the roots.

"I'll trade her for those twenty years," I said. "At least you can give me that."

"I'd do it gladly," he said grimly. "And I would take far better care of your family than you ever did. But even supposing I were to entertain your absurd proposition, what would become of me, the *old* me?"

"That's your problem," I said. "For once in your life, think of me, first."

"You're out of your head," said my father. He reached out and took hold of the silver hairpiece and very carefully tugged it back into place. Then he walked out of the laboratory.

That night I didn't even bother to call Alma. I got roaring drunk and stayed that way until I lost track of the days. When I awoke, I was bone weary. My head was splitting, and every part of my body ached beyond description. It was much more than a hangover.

I tried to lift my arm and the effort exhausted me. Most curious of all, I found myself at a strange desk. I stared at the pile of neatly lettered papers, the thick notebook. I looked down at my hands. They were gnarled, the hands of a man in his seventies, the skin puckered, leathery, acid stained. I lifted the water spotted shaving mirror that lay at one side of the desk and looked at my reflection. It was the face of my father, or rather, his face before he had turned back his biological clock. Or was it really my face?

I was terribly confused. Waking from a long nap does that to me. I was still in that half-awake state where one is not sure what one has dreamed and what is real. Sarah Frey came gliding in to drop a report on the desk. I reached out to caress her rump, and she nearly leaped out of her skin. She was out of the room before I could say a word.

I looked at the notebook, opened it and idly turned the pages. Was this work mine? My eyelids were terribly heavy. I began to doze off, and out of the corner of my eye I saw a younger version of myself, standing motionless in the doorway of the office, staring at me with his large, dark, angry eyes. And just in the moment that I dropped back into the deep solace of my nap, I thought, "You fool, the things you took were ephemeral. But I, after all, am now the Nobel laureate." ◄

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SCIENCE

# THE DANCE OF THE SUN

*by Isaac Asimov*

OCCASIONALLY, I RECEIVE RATHER DEPRESSING letters. Yesterday, I received one that was several pages long and largely incomprehensible, but the beginning was clear enough. It objected strongly to a book of mine on astronomy.

The writer claimed that I had neglected one supremely important matter, and the implication was strong that this neglect showed my incompetence. He complained that I had spent much time describing the Universe and trying to give a picture of its totality, then left out the key point. "What holds the Universe up?" he demanded. "Why didn't you try to figure out what keeps it from falling?"

The proper answer would have been: "Fall where?" but that would have just gotten him angry without enlightening him. After I tried to read his explanation of what kept the Universe from falling, an explanation I couldn't understand, I decided the wisest thing was not to answer at all.

But this is just one example of the type of question that puzzles mind after mind and which no explanation seems to answer properly.

There are always people who aren't satisfied that the law of action and reaction means that a rocket can move in a vacuum. "But what are the exhaust gases pushing *against?*" they demand.

And there are some people who will never be satisfied that the Moon can be rotating if it always faces the same side to us. "If we always see the same side," they say, "then it *can't* be turning."

Naturally, there is an awful temptation (if one has an advanced case of compulsive-explainitis, as I have) to try to find some analysis so clear and so irrefutable as to explain the whole thing once and for all. I have, for instance, tackled the problem of the Moon's hidden side on a number



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of previous occasions, and now I'm going to do it yet again in a new way.

This time, though, I have an ulterior motive. I want to do it so I can continue talking about Mercury; a subject I brought up last month.

To begin with, each planet has two chief movement: 1) it turns, or rotates, about its axis, and 2) it turns, or revolves, about the Sun. First, let's consider the matter of rotation about the axis.

By convention, the axis (an imaginary line) defines north and south. The axis intersects the surface of the Earth at the North Pole at one end and at the South Pole at the other.

Suppose, now, we imagine ourselves high in space, exactly over the Earth's North Pole. Looking down upon the Earth, the North Pole would appear exactly at the center of the planetary circle. (Of course, only half the circle we see would be lit up by the Sun—a little more than half in the summer, a little less than half in the winter—and the rest would be in darkness, but we'll ignore that as an unimportant detail.)

From our vantage point directly above the North Pole, we would see the whole planet turning about it exactly as a wheel turns about its hub.

But which way does the planet turn? There are two possible ways, and these can be most easily described by reference to the face of a clock. We all know the way in which the hands of a clock turn. Well, the normal progression of the hands from 1 to 2 to 3 on the face of the dial is "clockwise." The opposite direction, from 3 to 2 to 1, is "counterclockwise."

As it happens, the Earth, as viewed from above the North Pole, turns counterclockwise. This counterclockwise rotation, from a view on the Earth's surface, means that our planet turns from west to east.

You can see this for yourself, if you have a mounted globe in your house (or, if you are very enthusiastic, you can find one in the local school or library). Turn the globe from west to east, and look down upon it, as it turns, from above its North Pole. You will see that it is turning counterclockwise.

However, if you continue to rotate the globe from west to east and bend down so that you can see what is happening from a view over the *South* Pole, then you will find the Earth, from that vantage point, is turning clockwise. To give meaning to the direction of turning, then, you must specify the point of view, and it is conventional always to suppose that the view is from above the North Pole.

This orientation can be applied to the Solar system generally, because it happens that all the major planets are located close to the plane of the Sun's equator, and all the axes of all the planets, with the exception of

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Uranus, happen to be within 25 degrees of the perpendicular to that plane.

This means that if we imagine ourselves reasonably high above the North Pole of the Earth, we are also high above the general plane of the Solar system. If we then move over the Sun, we would find one end of its axis points more or less toward us, and that the Sun moves counterclockwise about it. We would find the same thing to be true if we moved over Jupiter, Saturn, Mars and so on.

This represents a fine display of orderliness, all this counterclockwiseness, but I warn you there are exceptions which I will take up next month.

But what if mankind ever engages in interstellar travel and is colonizing the planets of another Sun. Which pole should he call north and which south? To refer back to the plane of our own Solar system would be inconvenient and, at times, useless. I predict that the star itself will be used as reference. The end of its axis about which it is rotating counterclockwise will be defined as its north pole. That will almost certainly define north in satisfactory fashion for its planetary system generally.

But let's get back to the Earth and the Sun. The Earth is rotating counterclockwise, and we'll suppose for a moment that this is the only motion it has. We will suppose that, except for its rotation, it is motionless with respect to the Sun.

A person standing on the surface of the Earth will not feel the planet to be rotating, however. He will seem, to himself, to be standing still. Naturally, the point on which he stands is constantly changing its orientation with respect to the Sun, but that will be interpreted as the Sun moving.

As the Earth rotates from west to east, it will *appear* to an observer on its surface that the Sun moves across the sky from east to west. Because the real motion of the Earth's surface is counterclockwise, the apparent motion of the Sun is clockwise, (see Figure 1).

We can measure the rate of turn as so many degrees per unit of time; say, so many degrees per Earth-day (abbreviated as °/day) where there are 360 degrees in one complete turn.

Since clockwise and counterclockwise are rotations in opposite directions, let's arbitrarily give clockwise turns a positive sign and counterclockwise turns a negative sign.

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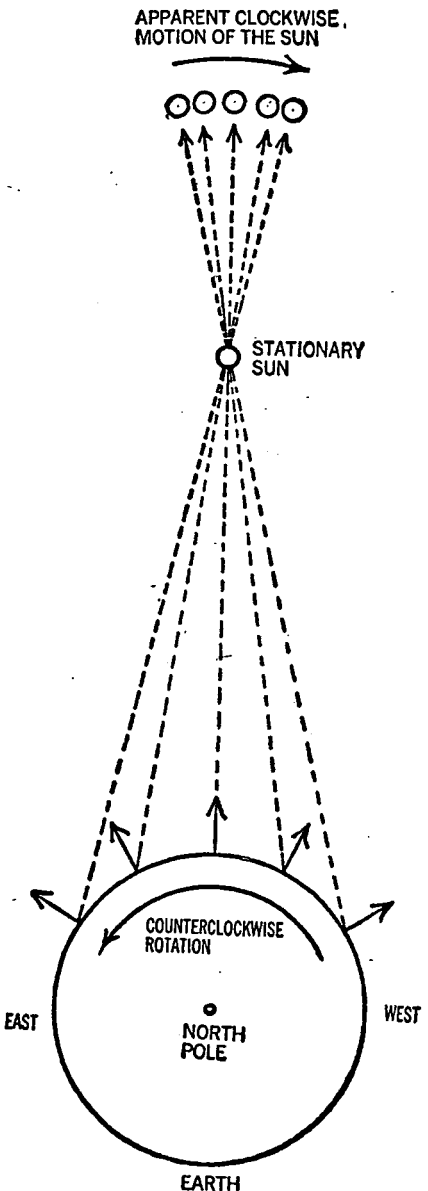
For instance, if a planet turns counterclockwise on its axis exactly once in one day, we would say it turned $-360°$/day. To a person on its surface, the Sun would seem to make a complete clockwise turn about the sky in one day. We could then say that the apparent motion of the Sun, resulting from the planet's rotation, is $+360°$/day.

We don't, however, have to pin ourselves down to any one planet moving at any one rate. We can talk about an arbitrary planet which happens to be turning on its axis at a rate of $-x°$/day. From its surface, the Sun would seem to be moving through its sky at the rate of $+x°$/day.

This is for a planet whose only important motion is turning on its axis. Every planet, however, has a second important motion. It revolves about the Sun as well.

If we imagine ourselves, now, to be high above the Sun's North Pole and observe the planets revolving about its giant, luminous self, we would see that every major planet revolves about it counterclockwise. This time there are no exceptions, not even Uranus. (All this regularity; all these counterclockwise rotations and revolutions, with so few clockwise ones, have to be explained. It is from attempts to explain them that all modern theories of the origin of the Solar system have arisen.)

*Figure 1—Rotation*

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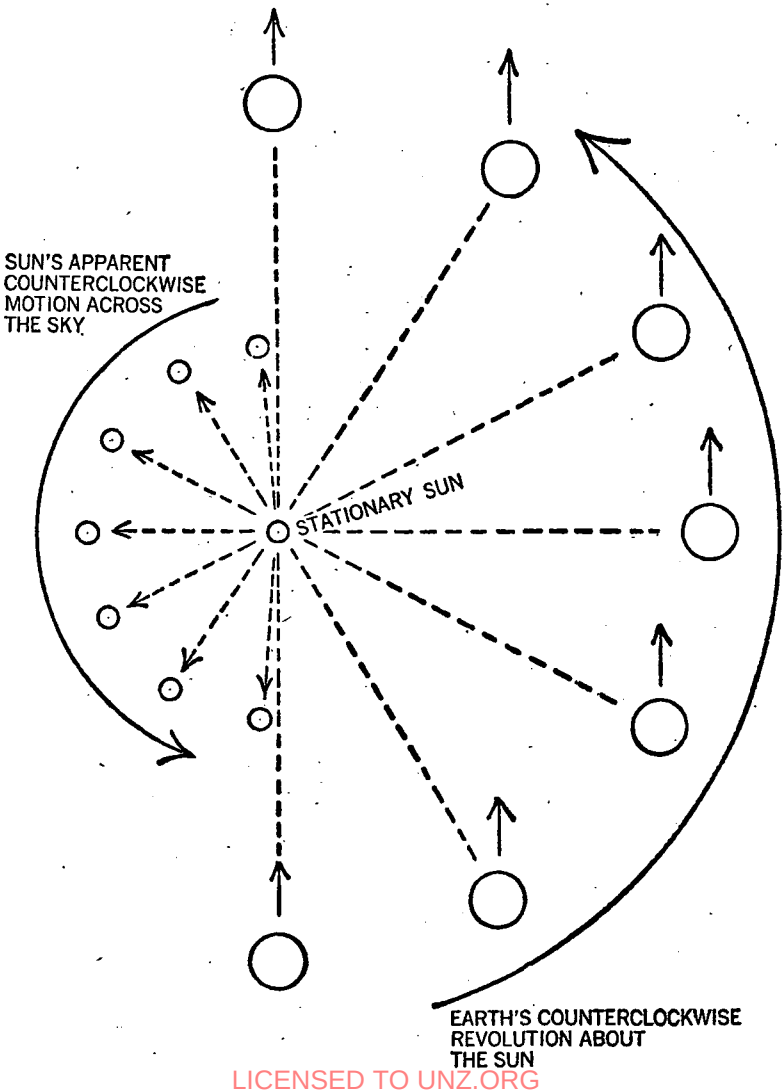
Let's consider, then, a planet revolving about a Sun in counterclockwise fashion and, to make things simple, let's pretend that this is the only important motion it has. Earlier, we considered a planet that was rota-

*Figure 2—Revolution*


SUN'S APPARENT COUNTERCLOCKWISE MOTION ACROSS THE SKY
STATIONARY SUN
EARTH'S COUNTERCLOCKWISE REVOLUTION ABOUT THE SUN

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ting but not revolving; and now we are going to consider a planet that is revolving but not rotating. To show that a planet is not rotating as it revolves about the Sun, we will make the little arrowhead, representing an observer, face always in the same direction.

As the planet revolves about the Sun in this way, you can see from Figure 2 that the Sun seems to move in the sky, from the viewpoint of an observer at a fixed point on the planet's surface. What's more, as the planet revolves in counterclockwise fashion, the apparent motion of the Sun that results is *also* counterclockwise.

Then, too, the apparent motion of the Sun in the sky, as a result of planetary revolution, is just as great in terms of degrees as the real motion of the planet about the Sun. When the planet makes one complete turn (360°) about the Sun; the Sun makes one complete turn about the sky, in appearance.

Suppose a planet revolves about the Sun, counterclockwise, in exactly 36 days. In one day, it travels $\frac{1}{36}$ of 360 degrees, so it is moving at a rate of −10°/day. The apparent motion of the Sun is therefore carrying it, *also* counterclockwise, across the sky at −10°/day.

Again, let us be general. If the planet moves about the Sun at a rate of $-y°$/day, then the Sun, in response, appears to move across the sky at $-y°$/day.

If, then, a planet both rotates *and* revolves (as is always true), the Sun's apparent motion across the sky is $+x°$/day due to the rotation and $-y°$/day due to the revolution. The total motion is $(+x°) + (-y°)$ or, more briefly, $(x - y)°$/day.

Let's see how this works out in the case of the Earth. The apparent motion of the Sun in Earth's sky, due to Earth's rotation *and* revolution, is such that, on the average, it makes one complete circle of the sky in one day. We can say, then, that $x - y = 360°$/day in the case of the Earth.

We can calculate $y$, the component of the Sun's apparent motion due to Earth's revolution, easily enough. The Earth completes its turn around the Sun in just about 365¼ days, so that in one day it moves 1/365¼ of 360 degrees. This comes to 0.9856°/day.

If $y = -0.9856°$/day, it turns out that in the case of Earth, $x - 0.9856° = 360°$. If we then solve for $x$, we find that $x = 360.9856°$.

This means that the Sun's apparent motion about the sky, due to Earth's rotation *only*, is a little bit *more* than one complete turn of 360 degrees in one day. Indeed, it moves just about 361°, with that extra degree cancelled by the part of the motion that is due to the Earth's revolution about the Sun.

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For the sun to turn exactly 360 degrees, due to Earth's rotation only, would take a trifle less than one day. It takes 24 hours to turn 361°, but only 23 hours 56 minutes to turn exactly 360°.

We can see that this is so by studying the motion of the stars. Every object in the heavens beyond the atmosphere has an apparent clockwise motion across the sky in response to the Earth's counterclockwise rotation. The stars do, as well as the Sun.

The stars, however, have no progressive apparent motion across the sky in response to Earth's revolution about the Sun. In the case of the Sun, the Earth moves about it bodily so that the Sun is constantly being viewed from a changing vantage point. In the process of this bodily motion about the Sun, though, the Earth's position with respect to the very distant stars can scarcely be said to change. The stars, therefore, do not alter their apparent positions at all (except for tiny elliptical motions that take a first class telescope to detect).

For stars then, the apparent motion due to rotation is $+x°$/day, which in the case of the Earth is 361°/day, while the apparent motion due to revolution is zero. The total motion of the stars is 361°/day, and they therefore make a complete turn in the heavens (360°) in 360/361 of a day, or 23 hours 56 minutes.

And if the stars are observed, the time-lapse between successive crossings of the zenith meridian does indeed turn out to be 23 hours 56 minutes. This period of time is therefore the "sidereal day" (from a Latin word meaning "stars") while 24 hours is the "Solar day." The four-minute-per-day discrepancy between the sidereal day and the Solar day is what makes the Sun appear to move against the background of the stars.

And what happens if the period of a planet's rotation and the period of its revolution (both counterclockwise) are equal? In that case $x=y$ and $x-y=0°$/day.

Thus, when a planet rotates and revolves in the same period of time, the Sun does not appear to move in the sky. It remains in the same spot constantly.

As seen from the Sun, the planet, as it revolves, would always present the same face to the luminary. In this way, the Sun would always shine on the same face from the same angle, which is equivalent to saying that the Sun does not appear to move in the sky.

The Moon presents the same face to us at all times. (The Moon revolves about the Earth so that we play the same role with respect to it that a Sun does to a planet.) This does *not* mean that the Moon is not

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rotating. It means that the periods of rotation and revolution are identical for the Moon.

It might seem that it is a tremendous coincidence that the periods of rotation and revolution should be equal, but, as it happens, this is not so. The gravitational influence of a large body upon a small body revolving about itself is such as to force the period of rotation and revolution into equality.

The greater the disparity in the size of the two bodies and the closer together they are, the more rapidly are the periods of rotation and revolution of the smaller body brought into equality. The Earth has succeeded in doing this to the Moon, and until very recently, it was taken for granted that the Sun had succeeded in doing so to Mercury.

Not only did gravitational theory make it seem reasonable that Mercury presented only one side to the Sun, observational evidence seemed to back that view.

You see, if one side of Mercury always faces the Sun as it revolves, then only that one side is ever lit up and only that one side can ever be seen by an astronomer peering through a telescope.

If Mercury is viewed over and over again at some particular point in its orbit relative to the Earth, then that lit-up side ought to be seen from the same angle. Any markings on that side would be the same at each viewing.

Conversely, if the visible markings are the same every time Mercury is viewed at some particular point in its orbit, then the planet would be proved to face one side always to the Sun. It would then follow that the period of Mercury's rotation about its axis would be the same as the period of its revolution about the Sun.

The trouble is that Mercury's distance, smallness, and closeness to the Sun make its markings very difficult to observe.

Nevertheless, in the 1880's, the Italian astronomer, Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli, tackled the problem. By 1890, he had seen the same markings in the same position so often that he felt it safe to say that Mercury rotated on its axis in the time it took it to revolve about the Sun. Mercury's period of revolution is 88 days (well, 87.97 days), and its period of rotation had to be 88 days as well.

This was accepted. It fit theory, and Schiaparelli was known to be an excellent observer. For three-quarters of a century, the statement about Mercury's facing one side only to the Sun was repeated in every general astronomy book written.

But then, in 1965, radar waves were bounced off the surface of Mercury, and the echoes were caught in receivers on Earth. From the

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nature of the echoes it is possible to tell whether the body reflecting the radar waves is rotating or not and, if rotating, how fast.

It turned out that Mercury is *not* rotating about its axis in 88 days but in 58.6 days, and this meant that it is *not* facing one side always to the Sun. Mercury's Sun-side and night-side, so dearly beloved by science-fiction writers, vanished into thin air.

If this is so, then how did Schiaparelli make his mistake? Well, let's see.

If Mercury rotates on its axis in 58.6 days and does so in counterclockwise fashion, then $x$ (the apparent motion of the Sun, due to planetary rotation) is equal to $+6.14°$/day. The period of revolution remains 88 days, however, also counterclockwise, so that $y$ (the apparent motion of the Sun, due to planetary revolution is $-4.09°$/day.

The total apparent motion of the Sun as seen from Mercury's surface, then, is 6.14—4.09 or 2.05°/day. For the Sun to make one complete turn (360 degrees) at this rate would take 176 days. To put it another way, from Mercurian noon to Mercurian noon is 176 Earth-days.

Do you notice a coincidence? It turns out that 176 Earth-days is exactly twice the period of Mercury's 88-day revolution. Suppose, then, that at some particular point in Mercury's orbit one particular place on Mercury's surface is directly under the Sun. Exactly two revolutions later, that same place is directly under the Sun again. And exactly two revolutions later, still again. In the in-between revolutions, that place is pointed directly away from the Sun, and it is the place on the exact opposite side of the planet that gets the full blast of the Sun.

In this case, particular markings would show up on Mercury's lighted side at particular points in its orbit in every *second* revolution.

Schiaparelli, observing Mercury, had a devil of a time making out markings. Clouds, haze, heat-quiverings must have ruined innumerable potential sightings. On a number of occasions, though, when he did make out certain familiar markings, they were often the same. If on occasion, the familiar markings were missing, he felt justified in attributing it to poor visibility. He did *not* notice that the occasions when he saw the markings clearly were always on even-numbered returns of the planet.

He assumed, very naturally, that if he saw particular markings so often, they were there to be seen every time, and that that meant Mercury faced one side to the Sun all the time.

(I'll bet astronomers never make that mistake again.)

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This peculiar form of rotation in which the planet presents first its front to the Sun, then its back, is not something that astronomers had ever predicted in advance. Now they are busily engaged in trying to find out what conditions are required to have such a situation result.

All I have said, so far, assumes that a planet's rate of rotation and revolution are constant. This is invariably true in the case of planetary rotation about its axis. It is not necessarily true for planetary revolution about the Sun.

For a planet's rate of revolution about the Sun to be constant, its orbit must be a perfect circle. If it is merely almost a perfect circle, its revolution is merely almost constant.

Mercury's orbit isn't even almost a perfect circle. At one end of its orbit, Mercury is only 28,500,000 miles from the Sun, while at the opposite end it is 43,500,000 miles from it. When nearest the Sun, Mercury moves at a speed of 35 miles/second relative to the Sun. When farthest away, it moves only at a speed of 23 miles/second.

If Mercury's period of rotation and revolution were exactly equal, then the inconstancy of its orbital speed would prevent the Sun from remaining in one spot in the sky.

While at its closest to the Sun, Mercury would be moving so fast that $y$ (the Sun's apparent motion due to the planet's revolution) would be considerably greater than x (the Sun's apparent motion due to the planet's rotation). This means that $x-y$ would be a negative quantity, and the Sun would be drifting west to east (clockwise) across Mercury's sky.

By the time Mercury was moving toward that part of its orbit that was farthest from the Sun, it would be moving so slowly as to fall behind the rotational period. Then $y$ would be smaller than $x$ and $x-y$ would be a positive quantity. The Sun would drift west to east (clockwise).

On the whole, then, the Sun would slide first eastward, then westward, then eastward, then westward, changing direction every 44 days, but maintaining its average position unchanged. If Mercury's axis were somewhat tipped to the Sun (and the quantity of such tip, if any, is not yet certain), the Sun would seem to mark out a narrow ellipse in Mercury's sky.

But all this is only if Mercury's period of rotation were equal to its period of revolution, which it isn't. The Sun makes a complete circuit of Mercury's sky thanks to the planet's non-equal period of revolution. Imposed upon this is the back-and-forth motion produced by the planet's orbital eccentricity.

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The result is a remarkable dance of the Sun of a kind no science fiction writer has ever envisaged as far as I know.

Suppose, for instance, you were on a spot on Mercury's surface which happens to have the Sun directly overhead when it is at its closest.

You will see the Sun rise in the east, while it is actually at its farthest from Mercury. It is then a little more than twice the width of the Sun as seen from the Earth and four and a half times as hot. As it rises (which it does slowly, for there are 88 days between Sunrise and Sunset) it grows larger. By the time it is at zenith, it is at its closest and largest. It is then more than three times the width of the Sun as we see it and ten times as hot.

In fact, the point on Mercury's surface directly under the Sun at its largest gets extra punishment, for the Sun does not pass quickly. It is in the neighborhood of the zenith that the orbital velocity overtakes the rotational velocity and sends the Sun moving eastward again. After a while it turns and goes westward again, slipping past the zenith and continuing on to the western horizon. As it slides down through a long, long afternoon, it shrinks until it reaches its minimum size again as it sets.

On the directly opposite side of Mercury, the same thing happens. During one of Mercury's revolutions, one side gets it, during the next, the other side does—in alternation.

Even more dramatic are those places on Mercury that are ninety degrees removed from the places which get the Sun at zenith at its largest. There, the looping motion of the Sun that arises from the non-steady orbital velocity of Mercury takes place on the horizon, and it is there that the Sun is at maximum size.

The Sun will rise in bloated fashion in the east, rise more and more slowly, then begin to slip back and set. After a while, it rises a second time and this time it doesn't change its mind. It moves toward the zenith more and more quickly, shrinking as it goes. At zenith, it is down to minimum size.

It sweeps past zenith without turning and begins to grow again as it sinks slowly in the west. By the time it approaches the horizon, it is bloated to full size. It sets, and after a pause, it rises again as though to take a last look around and make sure all is well. Then its sets again for good.

Mercury can thus be divided into four segments, which differ as to whether the Sun is high in the sky when it is relatively large (Hot Zone) or relatively small (Cool Zone). They are arranged alternately: Hot Zone, Cool Zone, Hot Zone, Cool Zone. It should be remembered

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though that even the so-called Cool Zone is super-torrid by Earth standards.

What I have described is the dance of the Sun as seen first from the middle of the Hot Zone, then from the middle of the Cool Zone. Other places differ in the exact place in the sky (how high above the horizon) the large Sun goes through its loop-the-loop.

Nor have we even yet exhausted the peculiarities of the rotation/revolution combination. The oddest combination, that of Uranus, and the most startling new discovery, in connection with Venus, remains to be told. And for that, there is next month.

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ADDENDUM

I write science articles for each issue of F & SF on any of a variety of subjects, and others write science articles for each issue of other s. f. magazines on a variety of subjects. It is inevitable, under these circumstances, that sooner or later there will be a duplication.

Well, it has happened. The very day after I mailed the above article to the Genial Editor, I picked up the November, 1967 issue of *Analog* and found in it an article entitled "Venus and Mercury—Locked Planets?". It was by the well-known astronomer and science writer, Robert S. Richardson, and dealt with the same subject as does my article above (and my article next month).

Although my article (and next month's too) was written entirely independently, it is only fair for me to point out that Dr. Richardson's article has priority, and goes into greater and more authoritative detail, both in words and diagrams. My apologies, Dr. Richardson.

—ISAAC ASIMOV

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*"Speaking of science catching up with sf," writes Ron Goulart, "in 'Muscadine' I mentioned an electric sitar and last week in* Downbeat *they were advertising one for sake." Well, it's only a detail in a story that is about Muscadine, who is a robot. He is neither a housekeeping robot nor a coal mining robot. He is a writer, and his stuff sells. Science may one day catch up with Muscadine, but who is going to figure out a way to retrain human writers?*

# MUSCADINE

## *by Ron Goulart*

FEELING THE TINY SCREWS scattered under foot in the dark hotel room, he stopped and said, "That nitwit. He's unscrewed one of his hands again and run off to send it to some damn nitwit girl."

Norm Gilroy flicked on the lights. The room was empty and he caught up the phone. While he was waiting for the desk, he knelt, holding the phone with his tilted head. He poked the rug, found a contact lens he'd lost over the weekend, and then located Muscadine's hand screws. Gilroy frowned and squinted at the things, dropped them in his pajama pocket. "Looks like his left hand this time. So he can still sign autographs."

"St. Tomas Hotel," said the night desk man.

Gilroy got his public relations voice back working. "Norm Gilroy. Have you seen Mr. Muscadine recently?" He must have left his chair and slipped out while Gilroy was taking his shower.

"Mr. Gilroy, Mr. Muscadine sped off in a taxi some ten or fifteen minutes ago."

"Uh, did you notice if he had his left hand stuck down in his coat pocket?"

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Gilroy, Mr. Muscadine didn't seem to have a left hand. He stopped at the desk to ask me where he could post a package at this hour."

"What did you tell him?"



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"I suggested a mailbox," said the night man. "Has Mr. Muscadine's hand been injured due to some lack of thoughtfulness on the part of the hotel?"

"No," said Gilroy. "There's a rather tragic story behind it all, and I'm sure Mr. Muscadine would prefer that it remain a secret." Gilroy was on top of it now, handling it. He'd been in public relations a decade, with Muscadine nearly six years. "Thank you." He hung up.

That nitwit has gone out to mail his hand to that girl pacifist who plays the electrified sitar. As he plucked off his pajamas, Gilroy said, "You don't expect to run into an electric sitar-playing girl pacifist at an autographing session at The Emporium."

They were out of spares, too. Muscadine had sent one last week, air express, to that girl who placed third in the Miss Wyoming competition. That made six, seven, of the things. Dacoit & Sons was still conservative in many ways, a publishing house still headquartered in Boston. They wouldn't like all these hands cluttering up the mails. Gilroy hadn't told them yet. He was going to find out a few things in the Bay Area and then cope with Dacoit & Sons.

Gilroy pressed his round face where he thought his sinuses were, took a deep breath, buttoned his black spruce suit and went down to the lobby.

The pharmacist in the all-night drugstore just off the entrance hailed him. "Mr. Gilroy, I got it."

Muscadine's hand? "What?"

The druggist was small, grey toned with sprayed blond hair. "The cure for your case of San Francisco throat."

"Did you see Muscadine go by here?"

"Fifteen minutes back. In a cab heading up toward Nob Hill. He didn't seem to have any left hand. Is he sick?"

"It's just overwork."

"Sure, a best seller a year, I can imagine. Tell him I really loved the gondola stuff in *Consider This Small Dust!* a lot. I usually don't go for flagellation, but this was beautifully wrought." He lifted a small electric motor up onto his glass counter. "This is for your throat."

"How?"

"I devised it myself. Built from a paint sprayer I got at an unclaimed sale, combined with an insect squirter. You spray your throat with it three times a day."

"It's my nose now anyway," said Gilroy, backing.

"Sure, you've picked up San Francisco nose. It's a side effect from San Francisco throat. People come out here from New York, particularly people who live around East 65th and the East 70's, they always seem to get San Francisco throat, followed by San Francisco nose."

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"I have to go find Muscadine," said Gilroy. But he returned to the counter. "You know, I do have an apartment on East 71st in New York."

"You didn't have to tell me, with your symptoms."

A foggy rain was hitting Union Square. Gilroy gave the St. Tomas doorman five dollars. "Know where Muscadine went?"

"He didn't give the cab driver a certain address," said the lumpy-uniformed man. His lower lip bulged under his chewing teeth. "Frankly, he spoke not too kindly to me, making remarks about how my uniform coat isn't the same color as my uniform pants. Which is only because I have the pants dry-cleaned Mondays. Of course, I read Muscadine's *Hence Vain Deluding Joys!* in the paperback. Being able to read between the lines, I'm not surprised to see that Muscadine drinks a lot."

"No, it's only that he gets a little touchy when he's been under pressure."

"Selling a million books a year wouldn't pressure me." The doorman narrowed one eye. "I think he may have headed for some all-night, after hours place. Because he mentioned wanting to revel till dawn."

"Thanks." Gilroy bounced down into the taxi that had hissed up on the wet night street. "Some after hours clubs?" he said to the driver.

"Lots of people like Freddie's Jiveareeni Village," said the driver.

"That's kind of a dated name."

"They draw the more conservative, nostalgic crowd."

"We can start there," said Gilroy. He massaged his nose, watching the rain fall heavier.

At sunrise Gilroy was climbing up through a tangle of manzanita and rose bushes. He was across the Bay in Berkeley, high in the hills. Dacoit & Sons had warned him to stay away from Dr. Pragnell on all trips to the West Coast. But he hadn't located Muscadine in a long night of tracking. There was another autographing at Paul Elder's bookstore at noon and a talk-show interview at the dinner hour. Gilroy was hoping Leonard Pragnell could give him some kind of lead.

The Pragnell cottage didn't seem tall enough. It was roofed with shaggy shingles, encrusted with flowering vines. Gilroy knocked with the brass lion head.

The door whirred, buzzed and swung open inward.

"Your house is sinking into the ground, you know," said Gilroy while stepping into the hallway. Wicker chairs, about a dozen, were piled up against the left wall, with a fat calico cat slumped on the pinnacle.

"Has there been some fatality?" asked Dr. Pragnell's voice.

"Where's your speaker now?

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Used to be in the hat rack, under the eagle."

"Come on into the library. What's the tragedy?"

"He's missing. Can you suggest a way of finding him?" The library door whirred open. "He's not here? Quest for the father, return to the birthplace."

"Flapdoodle," said Dr. Pragnell. He was a Lincoln-shaped man, hunched in a wicker armchair.

The room was waist high in piles. Magazines, newspapers, paperbacks, phonograph records, overcoats, dress shirts and a miscellany. "I won't exactly report this visit to Dacoit & Sons," said Gilroy. "I have dropped them, as jovially as possible, a few hints about Muscadine's worsening state. Have you heard?"

Dr. Pragnell rotated his wide shoulders. "Muscadine's a sensitive machine, Norm. Much more complex than your television set, say, and think how many times some little thing goes wrong with that."

"Never. It's my Mercedes that's always on the fritz." He sat on a solid pile of *National Geographics*. "Muscadine has mailed his left hand off to a girl pacifist down at Big Sur."

His cheeks hollowing, the doctor said, "You have to build them a certain way, Norm. All his quirky sensitivity is linked with his creativity. You touch the public heart on the scale Muscadine does, and you have to have a few quirks. That's where the big boys, your IBMs and your Rands, that's where they went flooey. They refused to program in the quirks. As a result I am the only person so far to have built a functional, android-human shape robot who can write best-selling novels."

"Oh, so? We think now Little, Brown's got one, maybe two."

Pragnell tensed. "They can't. Perhaps by 1978, five years from now, maybe."

"Little, Brown, we hear, has got one intense girl novelist android and one faggot short-story writer," said Gilroy. "And you know that old lady British detective novelist who won the Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America last year? She died two years ago, and Simon & Schuster didn't tell anybody. They just replaced her with an android."

"I assure you it's only I who has broken through. Now, what's troubling you?"

"This Bay Area always makes Muscadine edgy, being near you I think. It's much worse this trip. All over the country besides, things have been happening."

"Such as?"

"In Detroit he took to consuming forty cups of coffee a day, wandering around in the skid row and living on patent medicine. Then he tried to join the Merchant Marine, march in a protest against the war in Formosa and sign on as

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a fry cook. He almost married an automobile heiress, then threw her out of the second floor window of a motel in Hamtramck." Gilroy rubbed his nose. "I quieted that all down. In Chicago he'd go out only after dark, ordered the hotel suite lined with cork, had an affair with an actress nineteen years old, sat in on drums with the Muddy Waters band, got into a fist fight with a *Sun-Times* reporter, tried to run for assemblyman in Cicero and had himself photographed with his arm around the capo mafioso."

"Yes, all built into him," explained the doctor. "At times he'll think himself middle-aged and waning, others that he's an incurable drunkard. All done with microelectronics."

The calico cat strode in, yowled, and jumped onto Gilroy's back. Gilroy said, "Down in Los Angeles he snuck into Tijuana and fought two bulls under the name of Papa Muscadine. He rented a Cesna and flew the top lady gossip columnist in LA up to Vegas. Threw her out of the second floor window of a Del E. Webb development. I persuaded her not to sue, but we're dead as far as planting any more items in her column goes. In San Diego he challenged the Ku Klux Klan wizard to a fist fight, threw his hat in the ring as Conservative Party candidate for governor, tried to sign up a crew to trek with him on a lion-hunting safari to Africa, went on a three day vodka and ginger beer binge, sent a telegram proposing marriage to the seventeen-year old daughter of a former Senate majority leader and got himself nearly arrested in a paternity argument with a stripteaser from Balboa who does her act dressed as Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean."

"All normal," said Dr. Pragnell. "When I built all those bits of creative talent and best-seller instinct into Muscadine, I also fed in all the wild, impulsive traits of the great men of letters, past and present."

"He's much worse now," said Gilroy. "The earlier nonsense, I manipulated into good publicity." He reached up behind his head and stroked the cat. "He's accelerating, on a collision course with himself. He keeps dismantling parts and shipping them to girls he gets interested in. What's more unsettling, Muscadine's talking more and more about how he's betraying his talent. About ending the mockery in suicide."

"I would think," said Pragnell, "that the success of his recent books, *Fair Daffodils, We Weep!* and *Our Bugles Sang Truce!*, would lift him out of the slough."

"The last two books were nothing much," said Gilroy. "I thought Jocelyn from Dacoit & Sons was sending you royalty statements. *Bugles* hardly did 100,000 copies. Not one book club deal or movie offer, and the TV series we were

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talking never jelled. Muscadine's sliding down."

"He can't, he's a machine. He'll go on forever."

"No author lasts forever," said Gilroy. "Muscadine keeps telling me all the great writers go to pieces at forty, and he's got the idea that's his age. He sings in an Irish brogue at times, says he'll be taken off by the Lady of the Lake, a victim of a weak chest."

"You don't sound so good yourself."

"It's that fog in SF. How about Muscadine and where he might be?"

"I imagine he'll be back at the hotel by the time you get back to San Francisco," said Pragnell. "There's a homing device built into him. Before you end your stay here, bring Muscadine over, and I'll perhaps tinker a little."

"You know," said Gilroy, "if he keeps dismantling himself somebody's going to tumble he's an android. The Authors' League won't be happy."

"Muscadine is the first wave of the sea of the future."

"In ten years maybe. Right now the bad press could ruin Dacoit & Sons."

"I'll make a few simple adjustments on him, Norm. Don't worry."

"I'll need a new left hand for him."

Reaching back to a shelf, Pragnell got a paper sack and tossed it. "A pair in there and extra screws."

Gilroy detached the calico cat and left. He sneezed all the way down hill.

The blues singer, heavy and with dark glasses, was sitting on his bed. The luggage rack held a slim, rangy blonde girl of about twenty. On the floor, his hand behind his tight-curled dark head, was Muscadine.

Gilroy said, closing the hotel room door quietly, "Is that a blues singer on my bed?"

"One of these mornings," sang the Negro with his steel-stringed guitar, "that black chariot is going to come for me. Uh huh."

"That's," said Muscadine, "none other than Blind Sunflower Slim himself, it is."

Gilroy scowled down at him. "Oh, hell, where's your right eye?"

"Buried with the dead past," said Muscadine, sitting up.

The blonde girl said, "He lost it at the Neither/Nor Club out on Divisidaro Street. I'm Jean Pinajian from the San Francisco *Post-Enquirer,* and I was out there with a date and recognized Mr. Muscadine, who was sitting in on electrified harmonica, and asked for an exclusive interview."

"I saw a whole tray full of glass eyes when I picked up my new contacts," said Gilroy. "It'll be okay. Miss Pinajian, we'll be happy to let you have an exclusive interview tomorrow first thing.

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Right now, I think Mr. Muscadine should rest." Actually the android never had to rest. He was supposed to sit quietly in a chair while Gilroy slept, but lately he wouldn't always.

The girl nodded. "He's so tortured. Slim, let's go."

The blues singer left the bed, opened the door for the girl reporter and they both left.

Gilroy reached into the paper sack he'd brought. "I got you a new hand. Don't go sending it away to some peace protester."

"Peace," said Muscadine. He grabbed the new hand and absently screwed it to his wrist. "I'll know it soon. The river of forgetfulness flows out to sea and at last weary Lethe comes home to roost."

"Will you promise to stay here while I run down and buy you an eye?"

Muscadine rumpled his curly hair with his newly installed hand. "Washed up, Norman. The old greatness is gone, even the near greatness. Once I hoped I'd be allowed to express what I feel it is my mission to say and not be forced to repeat what the poor mindless mob wants to be told. I was happy as a boy in Wales or Baltimore, wherever it was. When I had that bicycle and helped with the harvest and had to shoot my horse when he fell into the canyon and walked the October streets smelling the old year die and sat on the street car that ran by the Mississippi. Gone, tossed by the wind, the past. Dead, as soon I'll be."

"Calm down," said Gilroy. "Sit yourself on one of the beds. We'll put fresh clothes on you and get over to the book store."

"I got a feeling this morning that black chariot is coming for me," sang Muscadine.

Gilroy could hear it out waiting for the elevator.

The Topless Tower was on the eighth floor of a building in North Beach. There were seven people dining in the big dining room, five naked waitresses. A thin, ragged man named Cullen Frimmer did his nightly talk-and-phone show from a back booth.

Gilroy and Muscadine were with Frimmer, waiting. The headache commercial ended and Frimmer said into his mike, "We were chatting, before that intrusion, with Neil Muscadine, author of *Consider This Small Dust!* and other such crap. I was telling Mr. Muscadine I find his work godawful. We're taking calls now from any of you who want to speak to Muscadine."

Muscadine was drinking boilermakers. Dr. Pragnell had constructed him so that he could appear to eat and drink and show the effects.

The manager of the Tower, a round man in a tuxedo, rushed up and slid Gilroy a note. The note

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said, "Tell him in his ear don't say crap. Remember the FCC."

Muscadine read the note while Gilroy did, and said, "Remember the FCC."

Frimmer was drinking sweet vermouth. "Crap to the FCC."

The phone at his left buzzed and he picked it up. "This is the lonely old lady of Presidio Heights."

"Now what?"

"That Muscadine. God bless him, I know that voice. Ask him was he ever abandoned on the steps of a church in Youngstown, Ohio, many years ago."

"What kind of crap is this?" asked Frimmer.

The Tower manager grabbed at Frimmer. "I told you don't say crap on the radio anymore from my Candlelight and Wine Room, you foulmouth bastard."

Muscadine got the phone. "I was indeed that waif, mam. I am your own beloved son, mother."

"Skippy," said the woman. "After four decades."

Frimmer tipped the table candle and tried to ignite the manager's tuxedo. The manager hit him in the ear. "I'm sorry to involve Mr. Muscadine in this," he asided to Gilroy.

"I'm sending you something, mother," Muscadine said into the phone. He spun off his left hand, using his steak knife on the tiny screws. "And something else."

Gilroy was blocked by the table from stopping Muscadine. "Easy," he said. "Talk about the book."

Muscadine took off his right foot and set it on the table. "Where are you now, mother?"

"Out on Clay Street, near the kiddie playground. Will you be coming home to me, Skippy?"

"No, I'm going to a better home than this world dreams of. The world is too much with me, what with one thing and another." Muscadine jumped up. "I'm going down slow, goodbye, goodbye." He ran in a rickety lopsided way out of the room.

Gilroy hung up the phone and chased him.

Down in the street the chase involved cabs, foggy hills, the Golden Gate Bridge. Muscadine stopped finally beyond the town of Sausalito, near an unsettled stretch of wooded countryside that hung over the dark Bay. He left the cab and went running through the trees.

Gilroy paid his cab and sent it away. No use having any more witnesses to Muscadine's displays. The other cab headed back for the city, and Gilroy began working down hill through the sharp trees.

Muscadine was strewn all along the beach. Arms, the other foot, legs, a tangle of miniaturized parts. All scattered over the grey damp sand.

Muscadine's curly head was at the water's edge. "The shore of oblivion," he said.

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"You nitwit. How'd you get yourself dismantled so damn fast?"

"My powers have failed, I'm a disappointment to my mother, the little lady of Presidio Heights. It is finished." The head hopped into the dark water.

When Gilroy reached it the head was sinking, giving off sparks and frizzling sounds.

Gilroy put the two cardboard boxes he'd found behind a Sausalito supermarket down next to Dr. Pragnell's cat. "I didn't bother to go back to the radio show for the other hand and foot."

The doctor said, "I tuned in on the interview. Perhaps I over-programed Muscadine. When we put him together again I'll fiddle some, hold back."

Gilroy sat again on the *Geographics*. "You're a medical doctor, too, aren't you?"

"Surely."

"You can sign a death certificate."

"On whom?"

Gilroy pointed a foot at the two cartons. One had Gallo Wine printed on its sides in red. "He's used up most of his best stuff in the six best sellers we had." Gilroy coughed. "His popularity's been dropping badly the past year. One of the reasons for such an intensive tour, this book."

"Simply kinks which can be fixed."

"You get only five percent of the Muscadine earnings," said Gilroy. "Could you build a machine, not an android, just one that sits there and writes what we want. One to do us a few books we can split fifty-fifty on. Dacoit & Sons will be mad, but they can't do anything without admitting Muscadine was a robot. After this, you can always build a new android."

"What do you want the writing machine for, Norm?"

"I'm associated with Muscadine in the minds of a lot of people, especially reviewers and critics," said Gilroy. "First you sign a death certificate on him. Announce he passed on suddenly, hinting at acute alcoholism with complications."

"Then?"

"Then we write *My Years With Muscadine,*" said Gilroy. "Followed by *The Day Muscadine Died* and *The Picture Life Of Muscadine.*"

Dr. Pragnell picked up his cat and patted it. "It could be done."

Gilroy nodded at the boxes, tilted back. "If I stay in California for a while, somebody's going to have to come up with a cure for my respiratory problems."

"It could be done," Dr. Pragnell told him. ◄

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*"'K. M. O'Donnell'" writes the author, "is the pseudonym of a 28-year-old male writer who lives in Manhattan, follows the sports news occasionally and realized one morning while scurrying through to the race results that there were strange headlines on page one, right under the masthead. Looking them over, Mr. O'Donnell became aware that these headlines were not a literal representation of the truth and, as a pedagogical gesture, decided to write 'Final War,' an autobiographical work."*

*H. L. Mencken once said that "war survives simply because so many people enjoy it. It is the dizziest, gaudiest, grandest sort of bust that the human mind can imagine." Whether you buy that or not, you probably will agree that it takes a greater talent to take the glamour out of combat than to leave it in. The story you are about to read takes the glamour out, and does it brilliantly.*

# FINAL WAR

## *by K. M. O'Donnell*

"'Twas a mad stratagem,
To shoe a troop of horse with felt . . ."

*Lear,* Act III

HASTINGS HAD NEVER LIKED the new Captain.

The new Captain went through the mine field like a dancer, looking around from time to time to see if anyone behind was looking at his trembling rear end. If he found that anyone was, he immediately dropped to the end of the formation, began to scream threats, told the company that the mine field would go up on them. This was perfectly ridiculous because the company had been through the mine field hundreds of times and knew that all of the mines had been defused by the rain and the bugs. The mine field was the safest thing going. It was what lay *around* the mine field that was dangerous. Hastings could have told the new Captain all of this if he had asked.

The new Captain, however, was stubborn. He told everyone that, before he heard a thing, he wanted to become acclimated.

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*Background:* Hastings' company was quartered, with their enemy, on an enormous estate. Their grounds began in a dishevelled forest and passed across the mine field to a series of rocks or dismally piled and multicolored stones which formed into the grim and blasted abutments two miles away. Or, it began in a set of rocks or abutments and, passing through a scarred mine field, ended in an exhausted forest two miles back. It all depended upon whether they were attacking or defending; it all depended upon the day of the week. On Thursdays, Saturdays and Tuesdays, the company moved east to capture the forest; on Fridays, Sundays and Wednesdays, they lost the battles to defend it. Mondays, everyone was too tired to fight. The Captain stayed in his tent and sent out messages to headquarters; asked what new course of action to take. Headquarters advised him to continue as previously.

The forest was the right place to be. In the first place, the trees gave privacy, and in the second, it was cool. It was possible to play a decent game of poker, get a night's sleep. Perhaps because of the poker, the enemy fought madly for the forest and defended it like lunatics. So did Hastings' company. Being there, even if only on Thursdays, Saturdays and Tuesdays, made the war worthwhile. The enemy must have felt the same way, but they, of course, had the odd day of the week. Still, even Hastings was willing to stay organized on that basis. Monday was a lousy day to get up, anyway.

But, it was the new Captain who wanted to screw things up. Two weeks after he came to the company, he announced that he had partially familiarized himself with the terrain and on this basis, he now wanted to remind the company not to cease fighting once they had captured the forest. He advised them that the purpose of the war went beyond the forest; it involved a limited victory on ideological issues, and he gave the company a month to straighten out and learn the new procedure. Also, he refused to believe his First Sergeant when the First Sergeant told him about the mine field but sent out men at night in dark clothing to check the area; he claimed that mines had a reputation for exploding twenty years later. The First Sergeant pointed out that it was not twenty years later, but the Captain said this made no difference; it could happen anytime at all. Not even the First Sergeant knew what to do with him. And, in addition to all of these things, it was rumored that the Captain talked in private to his officers of a *total* victory policy, was saying things to the effect that the war could only be successful if taken outside of the estate. When Hastings had grasped the full implication of all of this, he tried to imagine for a while that the

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Captain was merely stupid but, eventually, the simple truth of the situation came quite clear: the new Captain was crazy. The madness was not hateful: Hastings knew himself to be quite mad. The issue was how the Captain's lunacy bore on Hastings' problem: now, Hastings decided, the Captain would *never* approve his request for convalescent leave.

This request was already several months old. Hastings had handed it to the new Captain the day that the new Captain had come into the company. Since the Captain had many things on his mind at this time—he told Hastings that he would have to become acclimated to the new situation—Hastings could understand matters being delayed for a short while. But still, nothing had been done, and it was after the election; furthermore, Hastings was getting worse instead of better. Every time that Hastings looked up the Captain to discuss this with him, the Captain fled. He had told the First Sergeant that he wanted Hastings to know that he felt he was acting irresponsibly and out of the network of the problem. This news, when it was delivered, gave Hastings little comfort. *I am not acting irresponsibly,* he told the First Sergeant who listened without apparent interest, *as a matter of fact, I'm acting in quite a mature fashion. I'm trying to get some leave for the good of the company.* The First Sergeant had said that he guessed he didn't understand it either and he had been through four wars, not counting eight limited actions. He said that it was something which Hastings would have to work out for his own satisfaction.

Very few things, however, gave Hastings that much satisfaction, anymore. He was good and fed up with the war for one thing and, for another, he had gotten bored with the estate even if the company hadn't: once you had seen the forest, you had seen all of it that was worthwhile. Unquestionably, the cliffs, the abutments and the mine field were terrible. It might have been a manageable thing if they could have reached some kind of understanding with the enemy, a peaceful allotment of benefits, but it was obvious that headquarters would have none of this and besides, the enemy probably had a headquarters, too. Some of the men in the company might have lived limited existences; this might be perfectly all right with *them,* but Hastings liked to think of himself as a man whose horizons were, perhaps, a little wider than those of the others. *He* knew the situation was ridiculous. Every week, to remind him, reinforcements would come from somewhere in the South and tell Hastings that they had never seen anything like it. Hastings told them that this was because there had never *been* anything like it; not ever. Since the reinforce-

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ments had heard that Hastings had been there longer than anyone, they shut up then and left him alone. Hastings did not find that this improved his mood, appreciably. If anything, it convinced him that his worst suspicions were, after all, completely justified.

On election day, the company had a particularly bad experience. The president of their country was being threatened by an opposition which had no use for his preparedness policy; as a defensive measure, therefore, he had no choice on the day before election, other than to order every military installation in the vicinity of the company's war to send out at least one bomber and more likely two to show determination. Hastings' company knew nothing whatever of this; they woke on the morning of the election cheerful because it was their turn to take the forest. Furthermore, the tents of the enemy seen in the distance were already being struck, a good sign that the enemy would not contest things too vigorously. The men of the company put on their combat gear singing, goosing one another, challenging for poker games that night: it looked as if it were going to be a magnificent day. All indications were that the enemy would yield like gentlemen. Some of the company began to play tag, leaping through the abutments, comparing them to the forest that would soon be theirs.

Then, from all conceivable directions, airplanes came; they wandered, moaning, a few hundred feet above the surface of the cliffs and apparently waited. When all of them were quite sure that no others were coming (there would have been no room for them anyway), they began to methodically drop bombs on the company. Naturally, the pilots and crews of the airplanes were terribly excited and, as a result, they misplaced their fire quite badly, missing direct hits on the company more often than not. After a while, there was so much smoke around the vicinity of the cliffs that the pilots were unable to see at all, and they drifted over and peevishly sent excess bombs on the mine field. Hastings, lying on his back, guessed that the First Sergeant had been proved right because, just as everyone had been telling the Captain, the mine field did not go up. It took the bombs quite nicely, as a matter of fact, not heaving a bit. When every plane had released its bomb (some had to actually go over to the forest and drop one on the enemy; there was no other space left), they flew off in a dazzle of satisfaction, leaving the largest part of the company choking with laughter. Those that were not choking were unable to because they were dead. The point seemed to be that here it was the company's day in the forest, and now their own or some other force had come in and had screwed

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everything up. In the distance, the enemy could be seen holding cautious formation and then, with no hesitation whatsoever, they put themselves into lines and marched briskly away from the forest, taking the long route back to the cliffs. The new Captain got up on an abutment and made a speech; he said that this had been the first step in a whole series leading to mass realignment. The company applauded thinly, wondering if there was any chance that he might have a stroke. Then everybody packed up and went over to the forest; all of them, of course, except those who were dead. Hastings stayed with a work detail and labeled all of them so that headquarters, if they ever sent anyone up, would know who in the company had failed to take the proper precautions and was therefore to be permanently removed from the master roster list and placed in the inactive files, never to be bothered by formations again.

It was the election day disaster that caused certain men in the company to begin behaving in a very bizarre fashion. News received through the First Sergeant that headquarters believed that the president had won re-election had no effect upon the decision of these men to take up indefinite residence in the forest; they told anyone who asked them that the whole thing was a futile proposition and the company was always going to come back there, anyway. They refused to make formations and had friends answer for them; they covered their tents with mud and pitched them in the shadow of trees; they washed their garments in the rain and, furthermore, they told everyone in the company that they were fools not to join them. One morning, lining up in the cliffs, the First Sergeant noticed for the first time that five men were gone. He became furious and said he would not stand for it; he told the company that he had been through four wars, not including eight limited actions, and there was simply no basis, ever, to performances of this sort. The First Sergeant said that he was going personally to lead the company back to the forest to shoot those five men. They were all prepared to go, looking forward to the objective really, when a misguided enemy pilot flew uncertainly over the forest and, perhaps in retaliation, dropped thirty-seven bombs on it, blowing every tree to the ground, leaving the earth quite green and shuddering and completely decimating his own troops. They were unable to fight for a week because the enemy had to ship reinforcements, and when they finally got back to the forest, they could find, of course, no trace of their five men at all; only a few belt buckles.

It was right then that Hastings decided that the matter of his con-

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valescent leave had come to a head. He had had the idea and he knew that it was covered in regulations: *he was entitled to it.* Army manuals noted the existence of something called convalescent leave: if it wasn't for situations such as these, well then, for what was it? *They had to deal with it.* One morning, he carefully re-drafted his original request with a borrowed pencil on the back of an old letter from his fiancee and brought it again into the First Sergeant. Hastings reminded the First Sergeant that he had originally put this request in months ago. The First Sergeant, groaning, said that the Captain could not possibly look at it because he was still getting acclimated to the situation. But, the First Sergeant added, he had been talking to the Captain on and off and he had some promising news: the Captain had been saying that he would probably be completely familiarized by Christmas. It was only a matter of taking time to get hold of a situation. Hastings said was that a fact and, mumbling promises to himself, left the headquarters tent; he told the Corporal with whom he slept that he hoped to be out of this, sooner or later. Most of the company were still gathering for hours around the belt buckles, looking solemnly, telling each other that it was a damned shame what the Army did to people. Hastings, looking it over again, decided that he had written a strong appeal: how *could* it be ignored?

Gentlemen (Hastings had written), listen: I am applying for convalescent leave as I have already done because I have been in vigorous combat and, while adding little or nothing to the company effort, have driven myself to the ridges of neurasthenia. What fighting skills I do possess and what morale I have acquired through recommended reading materials have fallen to a very low point because of the discouragement involved in the present situation. We are capturing and capturing again one forest and some wasted hills. The forest is bearable; the hills are not, but in the exhaustion of this repeated effort, both have leveled to a kind of hideous sameness; *now there is no difference.* Indeed, everything has become the same, as is common now in cases of great tension occurring under stress situations to certain limited individuals. Recently, I have had cold sweats, nausea, some vomiting and various nervous reactions including migraine of relative severity that has cut my diminishing effectiveness even further. Most of the time, I can barely lift a rifle . . . and for all of these reasons, I am repeating my ignored request of three months duration that I be given convalescent leave for a period of several weeks to months for the purposes of renewed vision. Ideally,

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I would like to go back home, see my civilian friends, share my experiences with them, but if it is found that I cannot be sent there due to problems with transportation allotments and the like, I would settle for being sent alone to the nearest town where there are women and where it is possible to sleep. I would even be willing, if the nights were quiet, to go to a place without women; as a matter of fact, this might be the best action at this time. I am certainly in no condition for relationships, not even those of the fragmentary kind necessitated by copulation. Hoping that this request meets with your attention and approval; hoping that you will not see it as the frenzied expression of a collapsed man but only as the cool and reasoned action of the professional soldier under stress, I remain yours truly, Hastings, 114786210. *P.S.* I wish to note that my condition is serious; how serious only a qualified professional judgement could determine. If this request is not met with your prompt attention, therefore, or not, at least sent to a competent psychiatrist for an opinion, it is impossible for me to predict what the scope of my reactions will be: *I can no longer control my behavior.* I have been brought up all my life to believe that institutions are the final repository of all the good sense left in this indecent world; at this point in my life it would assume the proportion of a major disaster if I were to learn that the Army, one of our most respected and ancient institutions, were not to be trusted. *P.P.S.* Please note that the mines here are *already defused;* inform the Captain that they need not worry him.

On the other hand, the *first* request had been good, too. The day that the *old* Captain's reassignment to headquarters came through, all of the men in the company had come to his tent to stand around him, giving him notes and wishes of good will. Hastings had given him his request in a sealed envelope, and the Captain had taken it for another farewell message and placed it carefully in his knapsack; he told Hastings and the others that he was moved by their display of affection and he hoped that any of them who came into his territory later in the war would drop in and say hello; he would like to find out personally how everything was going. After all of this was over, the old Captain had crawled into his tent, saying, over his shoulder, that the company had given him an experience that he simply would never forget. The company smiled at the Captain's closed tent and wandered off to play poker. (They had been in the forest that day.)

Hastings thought that he would join them and then decided that this would not do; he would have

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to force the issue, and so he crawled, quite respectfully, into the Captain's tent and, finding him wrapped in an embryonic ball on his bunk, told him that he had a few things to explain. Hastings told the Captain that he had submitted a request for convalescent leave and not a good will message. At this, the Captain's legs kicked from the ball he had made of himself, and he told Hastings that he felt that he had very little consideration. Hastings said that this might all well be true, but he *was* a sick man and he then outlined the substance of his request. The Captain wrapped himself up intently and thought about it, said that he could court-martial Hastings. He added cheerfully that, since he was not legally in command of the company now, Hastings could be placed in the stockade for divulging confidential material to an outsider. Hastings kneeled then and asked the Captain what the proper thing would be to do, and the Captain said that he hadn't the faintest idea. He suggested that Hastings recall his request and, as a concession, court-martial proceedings would be dropped. He said that the appeal itself was unexceptionable; the new Captain, if one ever came, surely would approve it.

Hastings took his envelope and left the Captain, went back to his tent singing an Army song and fixed up his pegs neatly, but by the time he had all of them firmly in the ground, he found himself stricken with a terrible intimation. He went back to see the Captain, learned that he was in the officers' latrine, and waited outside there until the Captain came out. Hastings asked the Captain if headquarters or the new Captain might think that his request was a joke. The Captain said that he could not speak professionally but from what he had gathered from summation, he saw nothing funny in it at all; it seemed quite serious, quite to the point. Hastings said that the Captain might feel that way but, after all, he had been heading up the war, maybe at headquarters, they did not glimpse the urgencies. The Captain said that headquarters was filled with understanding people: they were people who had approved his own request for transfer, and they could be counted upon to comprehend the necessary. Hastings said a few unfortunate words about possible prejudice against enlisted men, and the Captain's face became bright green: he said that he suddenly realized that he had not finished his own business in the latrine. Hastings could not follow him in there, of course, but he waited two hours until the Captain came out and tried to pursue the matter. But the Captain, walking away hurriedly, said that he did not know what Hastings was talking about: he did not even know what

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this request was, had never heard of it in fact; and then he said that, upon consideration, he realized that he did not know Hastings either; surely, he had never seen him before. The Captain ordered Hastings to return to his proper company, wherever that might be. Hastings explained that theirs was the only company within two hundred miles, and the Captain said that Hastings was obviously an AWOL with energy. Then, he ran briskly away.

Hastings gathered that there would be very little point in following and instead went back to his tent. His tent mate was sleeping inside, and Hastings methodically demolished the tent, wrapped it around the Corporal, picked all of this up, groaning, and threw it into a tree. The Corporal hit with a dull noise. When he came out rubbing himself, he said that he was shocked at this; he did not know that Hastings was the type. Hastings shrugged and said that some men changed personality under stress. He wandered away, not breathing very hard, and bought a pencil from someone, took some toilet paper from the latrine and began a very serious letter to his fiancee. He had just brought matters through the Captain's second flight when the sun set violently, and he had to put everything away. He slept quite badly in the mine field that night (he did not feel like returning to his tent; not quite yet) and in the morning, found that his letter had been somehow stolen. Hastings had a good reputation as a letter writer, and men in the company were always stealing his correspondence, trying to get useful phrases. Hastings did not care about this particularly, except that lately he had begun to feel that he had only a limited number of things to say and they were diminishing rapidly. This theft, then, intensified his gloom, and he almost decided to seek another interview with the Captain but then he said: *The hell with it. We'll give the new man a chance. That is the least we can do.* Looking sadly at the enemy tents, Hastings again decided that he was in a highly abnormal situation.

Headquarters (wrote Hastings some time later on the back of a letter from an old acquaintance), I am forced to take this most serious and irregular action because of the prejudicial conduct of the recently installed Commanding Officer concerning my re-request for convalescent status. As you may or may not know, I originally placed this request several months ago and rewrote it last week because of the failure of the Commanding Officer to pay any heed, whatsoever. This Commanding Officer has subjected me to an exposure of terrifying inadequacy without precedent in a Captain of

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this Army and has imperiled my entire image of your institution. He has never confronted me concerning either request but has relayed statements through the First Sergeant (who is a war veteran with great sympathy for my position) that I am behaving irresponsibly. Headquarters, I ask you, is it irresponsible of me to request a convalescent leave? I have been fighting this war for a considerable period of time now, exposing myself over and over again to the same dreary set of experiences while around me the company ebbs and flows and the reinforcements creep in darkly. The reinforcements tell me again and again that they do not think that there is any sense to this engagement, and I am compelled to agree with them. This entire action has acquired the aspect of nightmare, I am sorry to say, and although I am not an unstable man, I have found myself becoming, not neurasthenic as previously noted, but truly psychotic. This is terrible ritual, gentlemen, terrible sacrifice, really deadly convolution of the soul. Also, they are stealing my correspondence. I have not been able actually to mail a letter for months, even to tell my fiancee that I have terminated our engagement. Gentlemen, I *like* my fiancee and what is more important, after two years of distance, I now wish to make an arrangement to spare her of me. What more significant proof can I provide of insanity? Hoping that you will give this request the most serious consideration and hoping that you will review the folder of the Commanding Officer here very thoroughly indeed, I am sending this letter out by and through devious and covert means. Yours truly, Hastings, serial number posted.

When he was finished, Hastings took the letter to the officers' section and gave it to the First Sergeant, who was cleaning some bits of litter from the top of his desk. He gazed dully at the First Sergeant and asked if it could be submitted through special channels, around the Captain. The First Sergeant gave him a look of wonderment and said that the letter could not possibly pass: it was not written in code as all direct communications to headquarters were compelled to be. Furthermore, the First Sergeant said, he had received exciting news from headquarters: there were plans to start a newspaper which would be distributed by airline to the company; this newspaper would tell them how they were progressing in their battle. The First Sergeant said that headquarters considered it a major breakthrough in morale policy. And, in addition to all of this the First Sergeant whispered, there was one other piece of news which had come through from headquarters

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which he was not authorized to disclose but which the Captain would make the subject of an address to the troops on this day. The First Sergeant said that this would probably be a revelation even to Hastings, a real surprise from headquarters. Hastings, still thinking about the newspaper, asked if it would contain anything except statistics, and the First Sergeant said there would probably be some editorials written by military experts. Hastings said that he wanted to awaken the Captain. The First Sergeant said that this was impossible because the Captain was already awake; he was drafting his speech, and he was too excited to deal with Hastings now. The First Sergeant added that he agreed that this was a shame. Hastings said that he was at the end of his rope. The Sergeant said that things were getting better: he recommended that Hastings learn headquarters code if he was serious about the message and then re-submit it, and he handed him a book. Hastings saw that the book was really a folder containing sheets of typewriter paper, and he asked the First Sergeant what this was. The First Sergeant explained that this was a copy of his short novel detailing his experiences as a veteran of four wars and eight limited actions. Hastings asked what the hell this had to do with learning code or with sending his message, and the First Sergeant said that he was astonished; he said that Hastings was the only man in the company so far to be offered his novel, and he added that everything in it contained the final answer, if it was only studied. The First Sergeant then said that the convalescent leave business was Hastings' problem, anyway; he had never cracked the code completely himself, and he doubted if it were possible to solve it.

When he came back to his tent, still carrying the First Sergeant's novel in one hand, Hastings decided that he had reached a moment of major crisis. There were obviously no points of reference to this in his life; he was definitely on his own. All of the company were getting up one by one, discussing the push to the cliffs which they were going to make later in the day. Some of the reinforcements insisted that to achieve the cliffs would be to attain a major objective, but older members of the company gently explained that the battle was probably endless. When they heard this, the reinforcements sat tearfully and had to be persuaded to strike their tents. The First Sergeant came out after a while and called a formation, saying that the Captain was going to address them. When they heard this, the company, even Hastings, became very excited because the Captain had never talked to any of them before; he had always been

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at the end of the marches, saying that he had to be acclimatized. Now, apparently, he had completed his assessment of the situation, and everybody was very anxious to find out what he had learned. Also they were curious, some of them, about his rear end and figured that at one time or another they would probably be able to get a glimpse of it now. Standing in the ranks, Hastings fondled the First Sergeant's novel and his letter and made a decision: he would present both of them to the Captain just as soon as he had finished talking. He would wait until the end of the Captain's speech that was, only if the speech was very interesting: if the Captain had nothing to say or only detailed how he intended to further familiarize himself, he would go up to him in the middle and simply hand him the letter. At least, he would have the man's attention. This would be a new element in the situation, right away.

Preceded by the First Sergeant, the Captain came from his tent and, walking carefully, came in front of the company. No one could see his buttocks because all of them were facing in the same direction. The Captain stood there, nodding, for several minutes, making some notes in pen on fresh paper, beaming at the motion. Hastings found this frightening. He had never before noticed how small the Captain's face was; at this distance it was seen to be covered with a hideous stubble superimposed over the features of a very young boy. In spite of all this evidence, he had not been convinced, apparently, because he wore a wedding ring. The Captain backed carefully against a tree and leaned against it, smiling at the company. "Some of you," he said, "have brought it to the attention of my First Sergeant that you are unhappy.

"More than unhappiness. I know that you are vitally concerned. You're concerned because you see no point in what you're doing. You're concerned because you can't see how what you are doing affects anything or anybody else. You're worried about this. This is serious. It is a real problem.

"It's a legitimate matter of concern, all right. When a group of men such as yourselves cannot feel dignity in the work they do, cannot feel that what they do is important to a much larger number of people, they break down. They become nervous. They begin to function in a cold sweat, and sometimes they do not function at all. I have noticed this about one or two of you. But even those I do not condemn. In fact, I have all kinds of sympathy for men in this predicament; it is not pleasant. I know what it can be like. But now and for all of you, this part of your life is over."

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The company cheered thinly. Hastings folded his letter and put it away.

"The situation, in fact," said the Captain, "is now entirely changed; more than you would have ever thought possible. *General war has been declared.* The enemy, who have become increasingly provocative in recent weeks, bombed one of our ports of installation last week, reducing it to a pulp. How about that? As a result of this action, the president of the country has declared that a general and total state of war now exists between the countries of the enemy and ourselves. At this moment, troops all over the globe are actively pouring in and out of our military installations; their weapons at the ready!

*"Now, what does this mean?* I'll tell you what it means. Gentlemen, you are the first. But, you are only the beginning. What you have gone through will be absorbed, will be a spearhead. And when we go out today, we go into these fields with the entire Army, with the country behind us. You are some lucky bunch of fellows. I congratulate all of you, and I congratulate you individually."

After the Captain had finished, he stood against the tree, apparently waiting for the company to disperse, so that he could return to his tent without anyone having seen his rear end. Hastings, weeping, drifted behind him, stood in a clearing, destroyed his letter. The trunk covered the Captain's behind from that angle, too. *I do feel better, already,* Hastings told himself, *I feel better already.* But when the Captain finally gave a cautious look in all directions and started backing slowly from the tree, Hastings took his bayonet and threw it at him, cleaving the left buttock of the Captain, bringing forth a bright scream.

"I still feel lousy," Hastings said.

The Captain had never liked Hastings. Hastings walked in the middle of formations, telling everyone as they went over the mine fields that they were absolutely harmless, a fraud. No one would have taken *any* precautions going over the mine field, if it had not been for the Captain running behind them. Some of the men picked up stones and threw them at each other; some men said the war would never end. When things got utterly out of hand, the Captain would have to shout at the troops, at distances of hundreds of yards he found himself bellowing and, even then, the company would not listen. All of this traced back to Hastings. He was destroying the morale of the company. The Captain suspected that, beneath all of this, Hastings was trying to sink the progress of the limited war.

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In addition to saying that the mine field was just as safe as a playground, this Hastings was a letter writer. He wrote letters to everyone; now he had written a request to headquarters (which was peculiar enough already; the messages coming from headquarters now were enough to confuse anyone, let alone a Captain just trying to get acclimated), giving his situation and asking for convalescent leave; he cited obscure regulations. The Captain knew, of course, that if he forwarded this material to headquarters, two or three field grade officers would come out in a jeep, capture Hastings and place him in a hospital for mental cases, and the Captain wanted to spare Hastings this. He was governed, then, by common, if causeless, feelings of mercy but nevertheless, there was Hastings, insisting that his form go through. The Captain did not know what to do with him. In the first place, he had only been with this company for six weeks and he was having all he could do to get acclimated to the situation; in the second place, he badly missed his wife and the cottage they had had in officers' quarters on a small post in the Southern tier. Furthermore, the Captain found himself wondering at odd moments in the night whether the war effort would truly be successful. There seemed to be some very peculiar elements about it. The bombing was so highly irregular, and some of the pilots did not seem to be very interested; they dropped bombs on their own side and also flew out of pattern. In addition, some of the men in the company had become attached to a certain part of the terrain; they were maintaining now that the entire purpose of the war was to secure and live permanently within it. The Captain did not know what to do about this. Also, Hastings waited outside of his tent often, trying to find out what he was doing with the leave request, and the Captain found that his free rights of access and exit were being severely limited, above and beyond the Army code.

The Captain had nothing against the war. It was all working out the way the preparation courses had taught. Certainly, it had its strange facets: the enemy also seemed to be attached to the forest part of the map and fought bitterly for the retention of certain cherished trees, but things like this were normal in stress situations anyway; after a while, all conflicts, all abstractions came down, in a group of limited men, to restricted areas. The Captain had been trained to see things in this fashion, and he had also been given a good deal of instruction in the intricacies of troop morale. So, he understood the war; he understood it very well. There was no doubt about that. *However,* the Academy had neglected to prepare

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him for Hastings. There was no one like Hastings at the Academy, even in a clean-up capacity. The Captain had taken to writing his young wife long letters on stationery he had borrowed from his First Sergeant (a war veteran of four major conflicts and eight limited actions), telling her all about the situation, adding that it was very odd and strained but that he hoped to have matters cleaned up by the end of the year, that is, if he was ever unleashed. Other than this, he did not write her about the war at all but instead wrote at length about certain recollections he had of their courtship, entirely new insights. In the relaxation of the war, he found that he was able to gather astonishing perceptions into the very quality of his life, and he told his wife the reasons for his action at given times, asked her if she understood. *We will get to the bottom of this,* he often reminded her, *if only you will cooperate.* His wife's letters in return were sometimes argumentative, sometimes disturbed; she told him that he was wasting his energy in the forgotten wastes, and that all of his strength was now needed to become acclimated to a new situation. When he read these letters, the Captain found that, unreasonably, he wanted to cry, but his bunk was too near to that of his First Sergeant, and he was ashamed. None of the officers wanted to be caught crying by the First Sergeant, a combat veteran.

Meanwhile, the Captain found that his communications with headquarters were being blocked for days at a time, and also that his messages, when they did come, were increasingly peculiar. Sometimes, the Captain succumbed briefly to the feeling that headquarters did not truly understand the situation, but he put such thoughts away quickly. Thinking them or putting them away; it made no difference, he was almost always depressed. *Continue on as you have done, worry not,* headquarters would tell him three days later in response to a routine inquiry. Or, *we are preparing new strategy here and ask you to hold line while formulating.* Such things were highly disturbing; there was simply no doubt about it.

One morning near Christmas, the Captain went through a near-disaster, a partial catastrophe. The First Sergeant came into his tent and told him that Hastings was thinking of submitting a letter to headquarters directly on the subject of his convalescent leave. The Captain said that he could not believe that even Hastings would be crazy enough to do something like that, and the First Sergeant said that this might well be true but, nevertheless, Hastings had brought in some kind of a letter that morning and asked to have it forwarded. The Captain asked the First Ser-

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geant if he could see the letter, and the First Sergeant said that he had told Hastings to go away with it but that Hastings had promised to come back later. The Captain put on some old fatigues and went out into the forest in real grief; he looked at Hastings' tent, which was of a peculiar, greyish shade, and he sighed. Hastings was sitting outside the tent on his knees with his back to the Captain, scribbling something in the dirt with a stick. The Captain decided that he was ill; he did not want to have anything whatever to do with Hastings. Instead, he went back to his tent intending to sleep some more, but when he got there, the First Sergeant was waiting for him with astonishing news. He told the Captain that somehow a message *had* gotten through on Hastings because some Corporal was up from headquarters saying he had orders to put Hastings away in the asylum. When the Captain heard this, he felt himself possessed by absolute fury, and he told the First Sergeant that he was running this company and he refused to take treatment like this from anyone. The First Sergeant said that he absolutely agreed with the Captain and he would go out to deal with the Corporal, but the Captain said that, for once, *he* was going to handle the situation the way it should be. He told the First Sergeant to leave him alone, and then he went over to a clearing where the Corporal sat in a jeep and told him that Hastings had been killed a few hours ago in an abortive attack and was being buried. The Corporal said that that was a rotten shame because everyone in headquarters had heard the story and was really anxious to find out what kind of lunatic this Hastings was. The Captain said that he could tell him stories but he would not and ordered the Corporal to return to his unit. After the Corporal had explained that he was in an administrative capacity and therefore not at all vulnerable to the Captain's orders, he got in the jeep and said that he would go back to his unit and report what had happened. He asked the Captain if Hastings had had any special characteristics which should be noted in a condolence letter. The Captain said that Hastings had always been kind of an individualist and forceful in his own way; also he was highly motivated, if somewhat unrealistic. The Corporal said that this would be useful and he drove away. For almost an hour, the Captain found himself unable to move from the spot, but after a while, he was able to remember the motions of walking, and he stumbled back to his tent and began a long letter to his wife. *I gave an order today in a very difficult capacity,* he began it, but he decided that this was no good and instead started, *I have*

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*become fully acclimated to the situation here at last and feel that I am at the beginning of my best possibilities: do you remember how ambitious I used to be?* After he wrote this, he found that he had absolutely nothing else to write and, thinking of his wife's breasts, put the paper away and went for a long walk. Much later, he decided that what had happened had been for the good; it was only a question now of killing Hastings, and then he could begin to take control.

The First Sergeant had nothing to do with things, anymore. He slept a twisted sleep, crawling with strange shapes, and in the morning, the First Sergeant awakened him, saying that headquarters had just sent in a communique declaring that a total-win policy was now in effect; war had been declared. When the Captain heard this, he became quite excited and began to feel better about many things; he asked the First Sergeant if he thought that it meant that the company was now unleashed, and the First Sergeant said that he was positive that that was what had happened. The Captain said that this would definitely take care of Hastings; they could work him out of the way very easily now, and he added that he had studied the morale problem of troops; now he was going to be able to put it into effect. Troops, he said, were willing to get involved in anything, but if they felt they were being used to no good purpose, they tended to get childish and stubborn. The Captain felt so good about this that he invited the First Sergeant to forget things and look at one of his wife's recent letters, but the First Sergeant said that he felt he knew the Captain's wife already and, besides, he had to make preparations for the war; he had real responsibilities. The First Sergeant explained that this would be his fifth war, but since each one was like a new beginning, he felt as if he had never been in combat before and he wanted to make some notes. The Captain said that this was fine, and then, right on the instant, he decided to make a speech to the company. He requisitioned two sheets of bond paper from the First Sergeant and sat down to draft it, but he found himself so filled with happy thoughts of Hastings impending assassination that he was unable to keep still, and so he decided to speak extemporaneously. He knew that he could deal with the company in the right way. When he was quite sure that he was in the proper mood to make the speech, he ordered the First Sergeant to call a formation, and when the First Sergeant came back to tell him that all of the men were assembled, he walked out slowly behind the First Sergeant, knowing how good a picture he was making. He stood near a tree for shelter

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and smiled at all of the men, especially Hastings, but Hastings, looking at something in his hands, did not see the smile and that, the Captain decided, was Hastings' loss. It was one more indication, this way of thinking, of how well he had finally become acclimated. Everything, after all, was only a matter of time.

"You men," the Captain said, "are plenty upset because you see no purpose in this whole operation. In fact, it seems absolutely purposeless to you, a conclusion with which I am in utter sympathy. It is no fun when emptiness replaces meaning; when despair replaces motive. I know all about this; I have shared it with you over and over.

"Today, we mount another attack and many wonder: what is the point? it's all the same; it always was. We've been back and forth so many times, what the hell's the difference, now?

"In line with this, I want to tell you something now, something that will, I am convinced, change the entire picture in your minds and hearts. *Something is different;* things have changed. We are now in a state of war with the enemy. Our ports of installation were bombed last night; in return, our president has declared that we are now in a position of total war. How about that?

"Before we have finished our mission now, ten thousand, a million men will have shared our losses, our glories, our commitments, our hopes. And yet, because these began with us, essentially we are the creators of the war.

"Are we fortunate? I do not know. Such is our responsibility. Such is our honor."

After the Captain had finished, he stood near the tree for a long while, marveling at his speech. There was no question but that it had gotten right through to the middle of the situation; it left no room for any doubt of any kind. Surely he had, just as he had promised, become fully acclimated and now, *now* there was no stopping him at all. And it took care of that Hastings; it took care of him but good. The next step for Hastings was darkness. Therefore, the Captain was enormously surprised when he saw Hastings, grinning hysterically, come toward him, a bayonet shining in his hand. It just showed you, if you didn't know it well already, that there was just no predicting anything with enlisted men. Before the Captain could move, Hastings raised his arm and threw the instrument at the Captain.

"What are you doing?" the Captain screamed. "I'm your Commanding Officer in the midst of a war!"

"I still say I'm not crazy!" Hastings screamed.

"We're in the middle of a war!" the Captain said, dying.

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But Hastings, apparently quite mad now, would not listen.

The First Sergeant had never liked Hastings or the Captain. Both of them were crazy; there was no doubt about it. Hastings, a Private, told everyone in the company that the mine fields were a sham, quite safe, really, and the Captain insisted that they were ready to fire. When the company walked over the mine fields, Hastings cursed to the troops that they were a bunch of cowards, and the Captain, his stupid ass waving, fell to the end of the formation and screamed at them to keep going. The two of them were wrecking the company, making the entire situation (which had had such potential, such really nice things in it) impossible. The war *was* peculiar, there was no question about this, but there were ways to get around it and get a job done. But the two of them, Hastings and the Captain, were lousing things up. The First Sergeant found himself so furious with their business that after a while he could not even keep his communiques straight: all the headquarters messages were getting screwed up in the decode because he was too upset to do it right and no one would leave him alone. There was no sense to most of the messages; they all seemed to say the same thing anyway, and the First Sergeant knew that headquarters were a pack of morons; he had decided this three days after he had taken over his job and began getting their idiotic messages. Meanwhile, the new Captain would not leave him alone; all that he wanted to talk about was Hastings. It was Hastings, the Captain said loudly to the First Sergeant, who was fouling everything up. He asked the First Sergeant if there might be any procedures to get Hastings to keep quiet, because everything that had gone wrong was all his fault. Over and over again, the Captain asked the First Sergeant to figure out a way to get rid of Hastings *without* giving him convalescent leave. All of this was bad enough for the First Sergeant but then, on top of all of this, there was Hastings himself hanging around all the time, trying to find out things about the Captain, asking if the man had yet initialed his request. All in all, it was just ridiculous, what they were doing to him. When the First Sergeant decided to do what he did, he had every excuse in the world for it. They were a pack of lunatics. They were out of control. They deserved no mercy.

One morning, for instance, around Thanksgiving, the Captain woke the First Sergeant to say that he had figured out the entire situation: Hastings was insane. He was investing, said the Captain, terrible dependency in an effort to

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become a child again and his functioning was entirely unsound. The Captain asked the First Sergeant if he felt that this was reasonable and whether or not he thought that Hastings belonged in some kind of institution. The First Sergeant, who had been up very late trying to organize some confusing communiques from headquarters in relation to the Thanksgiving supper, said that he was not sure but that he would think some about it, and if the Captain wanted him to, he would even check into Army regulations. He added that Hastings might have combat fatigue, something that he had seen in a lot of men through the course of four wars and eight limited actions; some men were simply weaker than others. The point here was that the First Sergeant was trying to be as decent to both the Captain and Hastings as any man could be, but there were limits. Later that day, Hastings found him sitting behind a tree and told him that he had figured out the whole thing: the Captain was obviously mad. He suggested that the First Sergeant help him prepare a report to headquarters listing all of the peculiar actions of the Captain and asked for some clean paper to do this. Hastings added that he thought that most of the Captain's problem could be traced back to his shame over his rear end. The rear end made the Captain look feminine, said Hastings, and the Captain was reacting to this in a very normal, if unfortunate, fashion. The First Sergeant said that he didn't know enough about modern psychiatry to give an opinion on that one way or the other. Hastings asked the First Sergeant to simply *consider* it, and the First Sergeant said that he would do that. After a while, Hastings left, saying that the First Sergeant had hurt him.

In all of this, then, it could be seen that the First Sergeant had acted entirely correctly, in entire justice. He was in a difficult position but he was doing the best he could. No claims could be made against him that he was not doing his job. But, in spite of all the times the First Sergeant repeated this to himself, he found that, finally, he was getting good and fed up with the whole thing. There were, he decided, natural limits to all circumstances, and Hastings, headquarters, the Captain and the war were passing theirs; after a point simply no part of it was his responsibility, any more.

This, the First Sergeant told the officers who knew enough to listen, was his fourth war and eighth limited action, not counting various other difficulties he had encountered during his many years in the Army. Actually, this was not entirely true, but the First Sergeant had taken to feeling that it was, which was almost better. The truth of the situation, which

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the First Sergeant kept to himself except for occasional letters to his wife was that he had worked in a division motor pool for fifteen years before he had been reassigned to the company, and that reassignment had been something of a fluke, hinging on the fact that the company had, before the days of the limited war, been established as a conveyance unit, and the First Sergeant had absent-mindedly been assigned as a mechanic. That things had worked out this way was probably the fault of headquarters; at least, the First Sergeant did not question them on *that* score.

Early in the career of the First Sergeant, he had accidentally shot a General while in rifle training. The General, forunately, had only lost an ear which, he had laughingly told the First Sergeant at the court-martial, he could spare because he never heard that much that was worth hearing, anyway. The General, however, claimed that the First Sergeant had had no right to shoot at him when he was in the process of troop-inspection, even if the shots had only been fired from excitement, as was the claim of the First Sergeant's defense. The General said that he felt the best rehabilitative action for the First Sergeant, under all the principles of modern social action, would be to be shot himself, although not in the ear. When the First Sergeant heard this, he stood up in court and said that for the first time in his life, he was ashamed that he had chosen to enlist in the Army.

When the head of the court, a Major, heard this, he asked the First Sergeant to stay calm and state, just off the record, what he wanted to do with his life. When the First Sergeant said that all he wanted to do was to make an honorable career and a First Sergeancy (at this time he had been considerably less, a Private in fact), the Major advised the General that the First Sergeant would probably have to be treated differently from the run of the mine soldier, and the General said that he found the First Sergeant's testimony very moving. It was agreed to fine the First Sergeant one month's salary every month for the next five years and send him to automobile training in the far North. The General said that he could think of some places right off the top of his head where the First Sergeant might do well, but he reminded him that he would have to remember to cut down very sharply now on all of his expenses as he would be living on somewhat of a limited budget.

The First Sergeant learned to live frugally (even now, he was still forgetting to pick up his pay when headquarters delivered it; he was always astonished) and repaired vehicles for fourteen years, but inwardly, he was furious. Be-

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cause of his duties in the motor pool he lost out on several wars and limited actions, and, also, his wife (whom he had married before he enlisted) was ashamed that he had not been killed as had the husbands of many of her friends. As a result of this, he and his wife eventually had an informal separation, and the First Sergeant (who *was* by then a First Sergeant) took to telling people just being sent into the motor pool that he personally found this work a great relief after fighting one war and three limited actions. They seemed to believe him, which was fine, but the First Sergeant still had the feeling that he was being deprived of the largest segment of his possibilities. He moved into a barracks with a platoon of younger troops and taught them all the war songs he knew.

In September of his next to last year in the Army, the First Sergeant fell into enormous luck. He often felt that it had all worked out something like a combat movie. A jeep for whose repair he he had been responsible exploded while parked in front of a whorehouse, severely injuring a Lieutenant Colonel and his aide-de-camp who were waiting, they later testified, for the area to be invaded by civilian police. They had received advance warning and had decided to be on the premises for the protection of enlisted men. As a result of the investigation which followed, the aide-de-camp was reduced to the rank of Corporal and sent to give hygenic lectures to troops in the far lines of combat. The Lieutenant Colonel was promoted to Colonel, and the First Sergeant was sent to the stockade for six weeks. When he was released, he was given back all of his stripes and told by a civilian board of review that he was going to be sent into troop transport. The head of the board said that this would extend his experience considerably, and told him that he would be on the site of, although not actually engaged in, a limited action war. Standing in front of the six men, his hastily re-sewn stripes trembling, the First Sergeant had been unable to comprehend his stunning fortune. It seemed entirely out of control. Later, getting instructions from an officer, he found that he would take over the duties of a conveyance First Sergeant in an important action being conducted secretly on a distant coast. As soon as he could talk, the First Sergeant asked if he could have three days convalescent leave, and the officer said that regulations would cover this; he was entitled to it because of the contributions he had made.

The First Sergeant borrowed a jeep and drove several hundred miles from post to a dark town in which his separated wife worked as a waitress. He found her sitting alone in the balcony of a movie

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house, watching a combat film and crying absently. At first, she wanted nothing at all to do with him, but after he told her what had happened to him, she touched him softly and said that she could not believe it had worked out. They went to a hotel together, because her landlady did not believe in her boarders being with other people, and talked for a long time; and for the first time, the First Sergeant said that he was frightened at what was happening as well as grateful. He had been away for so long that he did not know if he could trust himself. His wife said that finally, after fifteen years, she felt proud, and she told him that she knew he would do well. Later on he remembered that. But he never remembered answering her that only distress can make a man.

They went to bed together and it was almost good; they almost held together until the very end, but then everything began to come to pieces. The First Sergeant said that he would probably not be able to write her letters because he was going to an area of high security, and she said that this was perfectly all right with her as long as the allotment checks were not interrupted. When he heard this, the Sergeant began to shake with an old pain and he told her that the jeep had blown up because he had deliberately failed to replace a bad fuel connection. She told him that if this were so, he deserved anything that happened to him. He told her that nothing he had ever done had been his fault, and she said that he disgusted her.

After that, both of them got dressed, feeling terrible, and the First Sergeant drove the jeep at a grotesque speed toward the post. In the middle of the trip he found that he could not drive for a while, and he got out and vomited, the empty road raising dust in his eyes, the lights of occasional cars pinning him helplessly against dry foliage.

When the First Sergeant came to the company, they were just at the true beginning of the limited war, and he was able to get hold of matters almost immediately. The first thing that he learned was that his predecessor had been given a transfer for reasons of emotional incompetence and had been sent back to the country as the head of a motor pool. The second thing he found out was that his job was completely non-combatant, involving him only in the communications detail. When the First Sergeant discovered that his duties involved only decoding, assortment and relay of communiques from division headquarters to the company and back again, he felt, at first, a feeling of enormous betrayal, almost as if he had been in the Army all his life to discover that there was absolutely no reason for it at all. The Captain of this company communicated with

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headquarters from one hundred to one hundred and fifty times a day; he tried to keep himself posted on everything including the latest procedure for morale-retention. Other officers also had messages, and in the meanwhile, enlisted personnel were constantly handing him money, begging him to send back a hello to relatives through headquarters. The First Sergeant found this repulsive but the worst of it was to trudge at the rear of formations while in combat, loaded with ten to fifteen pieces of radio equipment and carrying enormous stacks of paper which he was expected to hand to the officers at any time that they felt in need of writing. In addition, his pockets were stuffed with headquarters communiques which the Captain extracted from time to time. It was a humiliating situation; it was the worst thing that had ever happened to him. When they were not in battle, the First Sergeant was choked with cross-communiques; it became impossible for him to conceive of a life lacking them: he sweated, breathed and slept surrounded by sheets of paper. He took to writing his wife short letters, telling her in substance that everything she had said was absolutely right. In what free time he had, he requisitioned a stopwatch and tried to figure out his discharge date in terms of minutes, seconds and fifths of seconds.

Then, at the beginning of the first summer, the First Sergeant had his second and final stroke of luck, and it looked for a long while as if everything had worked out for the best after all. He stopped writing letters to his wife almost immediately after the Captain was called back to headquarters and a new, a younger Captain was assigned to the command. This new Captain was not at all interested in communications; he told the First Sergeant the first day he was in that before he got involved in a flow of messages, he had first to become acclimated to the situation. That was perfectly all right with the First Sergeant; immediately he saw the change working through in other things; it was magical. Messages from headquarters seemed to diminish; there were days when they could be numbered in the tens, and the First Sergeant found that he had more time to himself; he started to write a short novel about his combat experiences in four wars and eight limited actions. Also, his role in combat had shifted drastically. Perhaps because of the new Captain's familiarization policy, he was permitted to carry a rifle with him, and now and then, he even took a cautious shot, being careful to point the instrument in the air, so that there would be no danger of hitting anyone on his own side. Once, quite accidentally, he hit one of the enemy's trees (they were attacking the forest that day)

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and destroyed a shrub; it was one of the most truly important moments of his life. Meanwhile, the new Captain said that he would contact headquarters eight times a day and that would be that.

The First Sergeant moved into one of the most wholly satisfactory periods of his life. His wife's letters stopped abruptly after she said she had been promoted to the position of hostess, and he quietly cut his allotment to her by three dollars a month; no one seemed to know the difference. He went to bed early and found that he slept the night through, but often he was up at four o'clock because starting each new day was such a pleasure. Then, just as the First Sergeant had come to the amazed conviction that he was not by any means an accursed man, Hastings came acutely to his consciousness.

Hastings, who was some kind of Private, had put in for convalescent leave months before, during the bad time of the First Sergeant's life, but the old Captain had handled the situation very well. Now, the new Captain said that he had to be acclimated to the situation, and so it was the First Sergeant's responsibility to deal with Hastings, to tell him that the Captain could not be distracted at this time. For a while, Hastings listened to this quietly and went, but suddenly, for no apparent reason, he submitted *another* request for leave. From that moment, the difficult peace of the First Sergeant was at an end. Hastings insisted that this message had to reach the Captain, and the First Sergeant told him that it would be forwarded, but the Captain refused to take it because he said that he was in an adjustment stage. So, the First Sergeant kept the request in his desk, but then Hastings began coming into the tent every day to ask what action the Captain had finally taken. The First Sergeant knew right away that Hastings was crazy because he had a wild look in his eye, and he also said that the Captain was a coward for not facing him. In addition to that, Hastings began to look up the First Sergeant at odd times of the day to say that the Captain was functioning in a very unusual way; something would have to be done. When the First Sergeant finally decided that he had had enough of this, he went to the Captain and told him what was going on and asked him if he would, at least, look at this crazy Hastings' request, but the Captain said that it would take him at least several months to be acculturated to the degree where he would be able to occupy a judgmental role; in the meantime, he could not be disturbed by strange requests. Then, the Captain leaned over his desk and said that, just between them, he felt that Hastings was crazy: he was not functioning like an adult in a situ-

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ation made for men. When he heard this, the First Sergeant laughed wildly and relayed this message to Hastings, hoping that it would satisfy him and that now the man would finally leave him alone, but Hastings said that all of this just proved his point: the Captain was insane. Hastings asked the First Sergeant if he would help him to get the Captain put away. *All* of this was going on then; the Captain saying one thing and Hastings another, both of them insane; and in addition to this, the limited war was still going on; it was going on as if it would never stop which, of course, it would not. The First Sergeant would have written his wife again if he had not completely forgotten her address and previously thrown away all of her letters.

Hastings and the Captain were on top of him all the time now, and neither of them had the faintest idea of what they were doing. Only a man who had been through four wars and eight limited actions could comprehend how serious the war effort was. Three days a week the company had a *forest* to capture; three days a week they had the cliffs to worry about, and on Mondays they had all of the responsibility of reconnoitering and planning *strategy,* and all of this devolved on the First Sergeant; nevertheless, neither of them would leave him alone. The First Sergeant had more duties than any man could handle: he supervised the officers' tents and kept up the morale of the troops; he advised the officers of the lessons of his experience, and he had to help some of the men over difficult personal problems; no one, not even a combat veteran such as himself, could handle it. He slept poorly now, threw up most of his meals, found his eyesight wavering so that he could not handle his rifle in combat, and he decided that he was, at last, falling apart under the strain. If he had not had all of his obligations, he would have given up then. They were that ungrateful, the whole lot of them. Hastings, the Captain; the Captain, Hastings: they were both lunatics, and on top of that, there was the matter of the tents and the communications. One night, the First Sergeant had his penultimate inspiration. In an agony of wild cunning, he decided that there was only one way to handle things. And what was better, he knew that he was right. No one could have approached his level of functioning.

He got up at three o'clock in the morning and crept through the forest to the communications tent and carefully, methodically, lovingly, he tore down the equipment, so that it could not possibly transmit, and then he furiously reconstructed it so that it looked perfect again. Then, he sat up until reveille, scribbling out head-

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quarters communiques, and he marked *DELIVERED* in ink on all of the company's messages to headquarters. After breakfast, he gave these messages to the Captain, and the Captain took them and said that they were typical headquarters crap; they were the same as ever. The Captain said then that sometimes, just occasionally, you understand, he thought that Hastings might have a point, after all. The First Sergeant permitted himself to realize that he had stumbled on to an extremely large concept; it was unique. Nothing that day bothered him at all.

The next morning, he got up early again and crept through the cliffs to the communications tent and wrote out three headquarters messages advising the Captain to put his First Sergeant on the point. When the Captain read these, he looked astonished and said that this had been his idea entirely; the First Sergeant led the column that day, firing his rifle gleefully at small birds overhead. He succumbed to a feeling of enormous power and, to test it, wrote out no messages at all for the next two days, meanwhile keeping the company's messages in a *DELIVERED* status. The Captain said that this was a pleasure, the bastards should only shut up all the time like this. On the third day, the First Sergeant wrote out a message ordering that company casualties be made heavier to prove interest in the war effort; two men were surreptitiously shot that day in combat by the Junior-Grade Lieutenants. By then, the First Sergeant had already decided that, without question, he had surpassed any of the efforts of western civilization throughout five hundred generations of modern thought.

Headquarters seemed to take no notice. Their supply trucks came as always; enlisted men looked around and cursed with the troops and then went back. They did not even ask to see the First Sergeant because he had let it be known that he was too busy to be bothered. The First Sergeant got into schedule, taking naps in the afternoon so that he could refer daily stacks of headquarters messages in the early morning. One morning, he found that he felt so exceptionally well that he repaired the equipment, transmitted Hastings' request for convalescent leave without a tremor, affixed the Captain's code countersignature, and then destroyed the radio for good. It seemed the least that he could do in return for his good luck.

This proved to be the First Sergeant's last error. A day later, a Corporal came from headquarters to see the Captain, and later the Captain came looking for the First Sergeant, his white face stricken with confusion. He asked who the hell had allowed that Hastings to sneak into the tent and thus get

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hold of the equipment? The First Sergeant said that he did not know anything about it, but it was perfectly plausible that this could happen; he had other duties and he had to leave the radio, sometime or other. The Captain said that this was fine because headquarters had now ordered Hastings' recall and had arranged for him to be put in a hospital. The Corporal had come up to say something about a psychiatric discharge. The First Sergeant said that he would handle this, and he started to go to the Corporal to say that Hastings had just died, but the Captain followed and said that this was not necessary because he himself had had Hastings' future decided; he would take care of things now. The Captain said that Hastings was not going to get out of any damned company of his any way at all; he would make things so hot for that lunatic now that it would not be funny for anyone at all. The Captain said that *he* was in control of the situation and there was no doubt about that whatsoever. The Sergeant left the Captain's presence and went outside to cry for half an hour, but when he came back, he found the space empty, and he knew exactly what he was going to do. He stayed away from the Captain until nightfall and, as soon as it was safe, dictated a total war communique. In the morning, breathing heavily, he delivered it to the Captain. The Captain read it over twice and drooled. He said that this was the best thing that had ever happened to anyone in the entire unfortunate history of the Army. He said that he would go out immediately and make a speech to his troops. The First Sergeant said that he guessed that this would be all right with him; if he inspired them, it could count for something in combat.

The First Sergeant did not even try to listen to the mad Captain's idiotic speech. He only stood behind and waited for it to finish. When Hastings came over after it was done and cut the Captain's rear end harmlessly with a bayonet, the First Sergeant laughed like hell. But later, when he went to the broken equipment, wondering if he could ever set it up again, he was not so sure that it was funny. He wondered if he might not have done, instead, the most terrible thing of his entire life. Much later and under different circumstances, he recollected that he had not.

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